



Battle Through The Heavens – The Legend of Yao Lao

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A prequel novel to Battle Through the Heavens (BTTH) detailing the life of Yao Chen.

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Synopsis :

In a world of Dou Qi where the strong are venerated and the weak despised, there was a boy was born to the Medicine Clan, one of the eight ancient clans carrying the blood of the Martial God and the sacred land of alchemists. This is the tale of Xiao Yan's master, Yao Chen, and his journey to the peak of the Martial World.

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<http://www.novelupdates.com/series/battle-through-the-heavens->

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Chapter 1 – The Medicine Clan

Zhong prefecture , Shennong mountain range.

In midst of this sprawling mountain range, basking in the fiery evening glow, was a bustling town situated high atop a mountain with its myriad structures built along the contours of the mountain. On the mountain peak, chiseled flat by it's inhabitants, was a small town with clear signs of human habitation.

This is the ancestral lands of the Medicine Clan, with the vast majority of the tribesmen sharing the same surname – Yao, though there also existed tribesmen with a different surname;Disciples of the tribe ,people who were related to the tribe and various dependents of the tribe.

However, regardless of their origin, everyone living on the ancestral grounds of the Medicine Clan were considered fellow clansmen,sharing an inseparable bond of kinship, though they were labeled as branch families.

As one of the 8 ancient clans,the Medicine Clan bear the character "Yao" as their surname, and are undisputedly the best practitioners of the alchemical arts in the world any every single clansmen, even those who aren't alchemists by trade, possessed knowledge of pill refining and pill appraisal.

[T/N Note: The word Yao literally means medicine]

Atop the mountain summit in the middle of an open space, was an

unadorned stone stele with an imposing aura. This stele is the symbol of the tribe – the ancestral stele.

This stele holds deep meaning for the tribesmen as only the most outstanding member of the tribe were allowed to carve their name, and those of their parents, on it. This was the highest honor in the clan, and any clansman who has his name carved onto the stele can be said to have not lived his life in vain.

Surrounding the stele were the various departments and ministries of the clan – the ancestral temple, the elders hall, the school, the clans treasury, etc...

[T/N Note: I decided to go with treasury instead of warehouse/storehouse as i feel it fits in better with the overall feel of the story.]

Beneath the mountain summit was the Clan's inner area where the lineal descendants of the tribe lived and beneath this lay the central area where columns of smoke and the rich scent of medical pills ever present. lived the families with power and authority.

At the foot of the mountain were the residences of the ordinary clansmen, with nondescript buildings akin to what one might find on an ordinary city street.

In a neighbourhood were a bunch of kids, not even 7 years of age, playing a game related to alchemy. The game the children were playing was not as simple as it looked as the kids were reciting alchemical mnemonics that were the real deal.

As the kids were enjoying themselves, there were a few big shadows approaching them amidst sonorous laughter with the shadows lengthening under the glow of the setting sun.

"Oi, you're still playing? It's time to go home for dinner!"

The kids jumped with joy, throwing themselves at the approaching figures.

"Daddy's back!"

"Daddy, i learnt about pill refining in school yesterday...."

Seeing their fathers returning, the children begin kicking up a din.

The adults laughed as they grabbed their children, hoisting them onto their shoulders.

Amidst the children was a 5 year old boy who was extremely quiet and was tightly grabbing onto his father's big hand, with the warmth of his father's hand being a simple pleasure.

"Chen-er , what's wrong? Did you misbehave and make mom angry again?"

The boy lowered his head.

"Mommy's angry again, and she said she'll ignore me from now on.....Daddy, you'll talk to mommy...right?"

"Hahaha, of course.Let's go, with the two of us working together,mommy's sure to whip up a delicious dinner for us."

Yao Huo laughed and lifted his son up, placing him on his shoulder.

"Ol'Huo, has your kid been misbehaving again?"

A well built man who was also carrying a 5 year old fatty on his shoulder walked towards Yao Huo with furrowed brows.

"Daddy, Yao Chen used aunt Qing's favorite vase as a refining cauldron"

The little fatty snitched loudly [T/L Note:Snitches get stitches....]

"Chen-er, that wouldn't be the celadon vase would it?" Sighed Yao Huo as the corners of his eyes twitched.

Yao Chen drooped his head, both his hands fidgeting on his father's head.

"Will mommy really ignore me ? Will she never cook chicken drumsticks for me again..?"

"Really now...you're finished. Ol'Huo, isn't that your first gift to your wife? Yao Chen, better prepare yourself for a beating"

Laughed the well built man carrying the fatty on his shoulders.

"Oi, Luo Bing you asshole, don't frighten my kid. Don't be afraid Chen-er, with daddy around, mommy's guaranteed to make some delicious chicken drumstick rice for you"

"Daddy, what's chicken drumstick rice?" asked the little fatty

"Something bad-tasting. Let's go home and munch on some Mantous"

"Mmm, Mantous are the best" Nodded the little fatty uncertainly.

Yao Huo stared at Luo Bing disdainfully.

"Ol'Luo, cmon, your kid's still so young, seriously...?"

Luo Bing stared back at Yao Huo

"You know nothing. Cmon, cmon, let's go home"

"Off we go!" Yao Huo exclaimed

Yao Huo and Luo Bing were obviously the leaders among this group of men; With Yao Huo's word, everyone went back home, carrying their sons

on their shoulder.

Yao Huo and Luo Bing were neighbours, walking back together

The little fatty's name is Luo Shu, and he talked incessantly on the journey back, tattling on Yao Chen and badmouthing his elder brother Luo Shan. However, whenever the little fatty mentions Yao Chen, he would steal a glance at Yao Chen, obviously trying to get attention with his tattling.

Be that as it may, Yao Chen did not take the little fattys' tattling to heart; His father's shoulders are very broad and extremely comfortable and everything would be perfect if only his mom wasn't mad at him

Both father and son returned home

"Mommy, Daddy's back"

Yao Chen shouted as he leaped down from his father's shoulders

A beautiful figure walked out from the kitchen with a surprised expression on her face and her mouth slightly agape. However, as her eyes shifted slightly and caught sight of Yao Chen looking at the dinner table with a face full of worry, the corners of her mouth curled upwards slightly and she quickly adopted an angry facade

"Hmph, finally back are we?"

Yao Huo faced Yao Chen, squeezing his eyes together

"Ahh, so hungry, is the chicken drumstick rice ready yet? My wifey Yao Qing's chicken drumstick rick is the best in the world, isn't that right Chen-er?"

"Mmhmm,mmhmm,mhmm, mom's chicken drumstick rice is the best"

Yao Chen nodded his head hurriedly

"A crafty old fellow and a crafty little fellow. Hmph,who wants to be your wifey?"

"You of course..."

Yao Huo winked as he reached out and grabbed Yao Qing who was pretending to be angry, affectionately.

"Dad, i'm hungry"

Yao Chen couldn't bear to watch any further as he stomach growled

"Forget it, time for dinner"

Yao Qing snorted and while smiling, turned around and led both father and son into the kitchen where several dishes lay covered on the dinner table; As the coverings were removed,the delicious smell of the dishes

assailed their nostrils

"Wooaahh, mom's the best!" exclaimed Yao Chen jubilantly

"You gotta tell mom she's the prettiest, women love hearing that" Yao Huo said buoyantly

"Mom's the most most most most prettiest in the world!"

Yao Chen was a fast learner

"Aren't you afraid of leading your son astray?"

"If i don't teach him, how is he gonna cheat a woman into becoming his wife in the future?"

"Does my son need to cheat a woman? Do you think he's you?"

"Hehe, that's rightwait, isn't something amiss here?"

"Back in the day, i got cheated by you"

"Mom, how did dad cheat you?"

Yao Chen blinked as he seized the chance to interject and get his mother to pay attention to him as he childishly worried that his mom would ignore him.

"You really wanna know?"

"Mmhmm"

"I'll tell you when you've grown up"

"I'm already grown up, i've already started learning basic flame manipulation"

Yao Chen exclaimed discontentedly, hopping off his chair, emulating a of basic set of skills in front of his parents, with his crooked and twisted figure drawing laughter from both his parents

After dinner, Yao Qing conveniently forgave Yao Chen for his mischievous act of using the flower vase as a refining cauldron and the family headed to the mountain summit on a stroll; With all of them enjoying the evening breeze and Yao Chen having unbridled fun while on the mountain path, it was a picturesque portrait of a harmonious family

As they approached the mountain summit, there were already quite a number of people strolling about the public square with the stone stele.

"C'mon, daddy'll bring you to a place; It's where i courted your mom all those years ago..." Yao Huo said with a smile

"Yao Huo!" Yao Qing stamped her foot, blushing.

“Hehe, let’s go. The sunset there is particularly beautiful,if we’re late others would’ve taken occupied the spot.”

Chapter 2 – Unexpected Disaster

There was only one path leading to the clan's school situated on the summit, with the other paths being heavily sealed and promising only death to all trespassers.

Yao Chen walked swiftly, with his Dou Qi circulating in his body. Without any techniques of his own, he could only circulate his Dou Qi throughout his body in accordance with the most basic flame foundation skill; At this moment, he had a premonition of making a breakthrough to a 7 starred Martial Practitioner

This feeling of premonition was intriguing, but it was still only just a feeling as making a breakthrough was not an easy thing to do after all. The Flame Foundation skill is a profound skill that allowed the descendants of the Medicine Clan to surpass the practitioners of the outside world, and allowed them to possess a special sensitivity towards pill refining in addition to having beneficial effects for training one's spiritual perception. However, with such benefits, the flaws of the skill was apparent as well, as each successive level of Dou Qi cultivated using the flame foundation skill requiring vast amounts of resources.

Naturally, the consumption of said resources are worthwhile as during the process of levelling up, drawing on the resources consumed, one's spiritual perception, affinity towards the flame and wood elements as well as the toughness and control over Dou Qi would soar.

In the Medicine Clan, 70 percent of the clansmen were predisposed towards pill refining with any random person drawn from the tribe being a tier 2 or 3 alchemist. Discounting the fact that the majority of the

clansmen were of the flame and wood elements, an important reason for this was the fact that they cultivated in the Flame Foundation skill since young.

Amongst the clan's youths, Yao Chen could not be considered the most outstanding as even though he could barely be considered amongst the top 10, he could slip out of the ranking with one misstep.

Every batch of the clan's school has about 100 students, with 5 batches of students in total amounting to close to 500 students. Yao Chen's ranking, while not particularly eye-catching, was also not bad enough for the elders to give up on him.

Although most of the student's families had financial difficulties, or had weak talent, the elders of the school responsible for educating them did not slacken off and taught them all conscientiously in accordance with the clan's regulations.

The basics of pill refining were being taught in school today, and the instructor had everyone's rapt attention. Yao Chen was not unfamiliar with pill refining as his father was able to refine pills as well, and his house had a pill cauldron that his father deeply treasured that would set his heart racing and fill him with an urge to try refining whenever he laid eyes on it. His father said that this was an inborn trait that members of the clan possessed and a natural talent in its own right, and even praised Yao Chen, saying that he had the natural aptitude to be a alchemist. However, he was still too young and should focus on his cultivation first, and slowly learn the basics of pill refining taught in school.

Pill refining was taught the entire day and a whole new world was revealed before Yao Chen's eyes; Different materials would have different

reactions when processed by the alchemist's flame, and varying combinations of materials would produce pills with different effects.

Pill refining was of the utmost importance to the clan and the instructor responsible for the basics of pill refining was the chief elder Yao Lan who had decades of experience. With regards to teaching in a large class, Yao Lan was undisputedly best in the clan, and it could even be said that the grade 6 and 7 alchemists of the clan, were his inferiors when it came to teaching the basics.

If one was strong, his strength could be attributed to talent and inborn gifts, but producing an outstanding student was an entirely different matter altogether, and it is due to this that Yao Huo did not teach Yao Chen personally but left it to the clan's instructors.

The result of him doing so was successful and Yao Chen, under the tutelage of Yao Lan, showed great interest in pill refining as thoughts of countless pills like the Blood Stopping pill, Blood Replenishing pill were floating in his mind...

"Alright, let's not bite off more than we can chew, that's it for today. Everyone go home and try your hands at the blood stopping pill and bring it tomorrow. I'll evaluate it and give everyone some pointers."

Elder Yao Lan smiled affably; There were a few good seedlings in this batch of students. While they may not equal those geniuses of lineal descent, who were never lacking in cultivation resources, in terms of Dou Qi cultivation, they were roughly equal in terms of pill refining, with they each had a bright future ahead of them. Though he may be ranked last amongst the great elders of the clan, whenever he looked at these outstanding seedlings, he would feel that his sacrifice was worth it. Even if

in the end, these students of his grew up into outstanding figures in the clan never once called his teacher, he would always be the elder of the school, and this gave him purpose and meaning in his life.

"Elder, why can the Primal Frost grass and the Seven Fire grass be combined together? Don't their medicinal properties counteract each other?" Yao Chen raised his hand and asked suddenly.

"Ahh Yao Huo's child right? Not bad, being able to ask this question proves that you remembered what i said just now. Memorisation is the most fundamental requirement of being a alchemist; Though the properties of the primal frost grass and seven fire grass counteract each other, our medicine clan has a special method of combining the both of them. As for the crux of the matter, that is something i will be going through tomorrow. Go home and ponder on this question everyone, i will be asking questioning you on this matter tomorrow."

Yao Lan nodded his head in satisfaction, as he would have raised this question himself if Yao Chen did not. As expected, he could see the eyes of a few talented students light up with a desire not to be outdone after all, only with competition and rivals, could one's rate of improvement increase. Yao Chen did not concern himself with thought of competition or rivals as he was engrossed in this new world of pill refining and muddled his way through the following class on Dou Qi and finally finished the school day when evening came and he rushed his way back home.

"Brother Chen, where are you going? We were going to see what the little princess from the Demon Clan looked like.."

The little fatty Luo Shu stretched his hands out but was unable to grasp

Yao Chen. They heard about the divine demon of the Demon Clan bringing the little demon princess to the Medicine Clan, apparently to ask for some pills. The mighty divine demon did not interest little fatty the slightest, but the little demon princess on the other hand sounded alluring – what would she look like? Had her demonic characteristics receded yet, or would she still look like a demon beast?

Yao Chen had his thoughts fully focused on pill refining and had long since forgotten about the demon princess.

As he reached home, he greeted his mother and rushed into his father's pill refining room. Yao Huo was a tier 4 alchemist, and while he could not be considered particularly strong in the clan, he was definitely not weak either. In the room were plenty medicinal materials, more than sufficient to refine a pill that was of the 3rd tier and below.

In the past when he knew nothing about refining, he simply stuck to his father and learnt about various medicinal herbs. Now with the instruction of Yao Lan, Yao Chen could not wait to try his hand at pill refining.

However, Yao Chen did not ignore his daily basic training and after circulating his Dou Qi for a while, he opened the cauldron and grabbed some medicinal herbs. Yao Chen's goal was the Blood Stopping pill, which was also the homework given by Yao Lan. With the exception of a major artery be severed leading to major blood loss, the tier 1 Blood Stopping pill was able to quickly halt blood loss and is one of the most common medical pills for external wounds.

The Blood Stopping pill was a basic pill that wasn't tough to refine, the major requirement for refining it was that the flame used for refining had to be supported by Dou Qi. With the power of a 6 starred Martial

Practitioner, it was barely possible for Yao Chen and he was only able to refine one pill after giving it all he had.

The single pill that he refined using a cauldron full of ingredients, had dull colouring that was indicative of heavy side effects and Yao Chen knew it was a failure without needing Yao Lan to tell him that.

Yao Chen carefully thought about the obvious mistakes he made while refining the pill and sat down to meditate, recovering his Dou Qi.

After an hour, when his Dou Qi had recovered, Yao Chen grabbed some materials, threw it into the cauldron and started refining once again. Refining a tier 1 pill did not cost much in the medicine clan and Yao Chen was able to carry on refining without thinking too much about it. This time round, the refining went a lot more smoothly though there were still some areas that still needed work. With a resounding bang, the cauldron opened and 3 pills were refined. Although the pills were red in colour with a few specks of black indicating undesirable side effects, it was obviously better than the first attempt.

Yao Chen's eyes lit up, and circulating his Dou Qi, lifted the pills from the cauldron and carefully placed them in a bottle.

Yao Chen was not satisfied and sat down once more to meditate, recovering his Dou Qi. The process of refining, where he could feel the pill slowly taking shape under the guidance of his Dou Qi interested him greatly. However, he was unable to attempt his third refining when his mother's voice sounded out.

"Yao Chen , it's dinner time"

"OK"

"Where's Luo Shu?"

"He went to look at the little demon princess"

This was when Yao Chen remembered his promise with Luo Shu to go look at the princess.

Yao Qing was pleased. The kids were growing up, going off to sneak peaks at beautiful girls.

"Why didn't you go?"

"I forgot"

Yao Chen scratched his head and answered truthfully.

Yao Qing did not know whether to be pleased or displeased. Her son was 13 years of age, and should be interested in the opposite sex, how could he have forgotten about his promise....?

Although this could be a good thing, as he could concentrate on his cultivation without being distracted by girls.

"Mom, i'm finished eating, i'll go...practice now"

This was the first time Yao Chen ate so quickly. In the time it took for a few sentences to be spoken, he cleaned his plate and went back into the pill refining room.

Yao Qing was starting to be worried, was Yao Chen's interest in girls a little too low? Looks like she should have a talk with Yao Huo and have the two of them talk about "manly" stuff and not matters related to cultivation for once.

After all, she married Yao Huo in no small part due to that mouth of his and she felt that he should at least pass on that glib mouth of his to his son. After all, one had to be prepared for the future, and in the medicine clan good girls had to be taken early otherwise, if one is late in doing so, he would only be left with the leftovers.

At this point of time, Yao Chen had yet to experience the good points of girls, from his point of view, girls simply liked to make a big fuss out of nothing and were just plain annoying and irritating. Of course, his mom was different.

Pill refining was so much more interesting! In the pill refining room, once Yao Chen's Dou Qi had recovered, he would immediately grab a bunch of ingredients and start refining the Blood Stopping pills, with each attempt being better than the previous.

After his seventh attempt, Yao Chen lost interest in the Blood Stopping pill as his previous 2 attempts were already perfect and had ceased being a challenge to him.

Suddenly, a pill formula appeared in Yao Chen's mind. This formula was

something that he once saw in his father notes and was something that could recover Dou Qi in a short period of time!

Currently, the only thing constraining his pill refining was his 6 starred Martial Practitioner's Dou Qi. If he was able to recover his Dou Qi more quickly, he would have more time available to refine pills.

His first goal should be the Qi Recovering pill!

Once he thought of this, Yao Chen immediately sprang into action and started preparing himself, and once again ran through the formula for the Qi Recovering pill, confirming it once more.

Yao Chen possessed an eidetic memory, which was something that all alchemists possessed. The only difference being that some people obtained it later in life when their spiritual perception was of sufficient strength while others were born with it.

As expected, the first attempt was a complete failure with not even the shape of the pill being formed, and all the ingredients reduced to worthless dregs.

Yao Chen was stunned looking at the pile of medicinal dregs, and was little unsure of what happened as it seemed as if he had made mistakes in every step of the pill refining process. A normal person would take a break before trying again when faced with this sort of failure but Yao Chen was different. He gritted his teeth, recovered his Dou Qi, grabbed another set ingredients and attempted refining the pill again.

Fizzle....

This attempt was another utter failure with not even any medicinal dregs being formed as black smoke billowed out of the cauldron and the room was left with a sharp stench from the failed attempt.

"Cough cough..."

Yao Chen coughed heavily as he activated the ventilation mechanisms installed in the room, driving the black smoke out. This time around, Yao Chen was a little disappointed, though his thirst for success did not diminish due to his failure but intensified instead.

"What did i do wrong? Or rather, what did i do correctly, but not to a sufficient extent..?"

Yao Chen did not know that while the Qi Recovering pill was ordinarily a tier 1 pill, the formula for the pill that he saw in his father's notes was a modified version that was tier 2 in rank ! The modified pill formula was not something that a novice who has only learnt the basics would be able to refine as several steps in the process were methods that were unique to Yao Huo, and without careful instruction from him, the refining would never succeed.

Yao Chen only stopped refining late at night when his Dou Qi was depleted, and he was exhausted to the point where his spiritual sensitivity was dulled. If he were to forcefully continue, he would only be wasting the medical ingredients so he took a shower, ate the Body Refining pill that his father specially prepared for him and laid down on his bed, falling asleep as soon as his head touched the pillow. Although he was sound

asleep, his finger continued twitching as strands of Dou Qi continued moving in front of his body, as he continued refining pills even in his sleep.

The next morning, Yao Chen did not bring the Blood Stopping pill that he successfully refined to school with him. From his point of view, though he may have successfully refined the Blood Stopping pill, he failed utterly when it came to the Qi Recovering pill as he could not even let the pill take shape, much less remove the harmful side effects.

Yao Lan originally paid much attention to Yao Chen because being able to raise questions regarding the combination of the Primal Frost Grass and Seven Fire Grass was indicative of natural talent, and that he may very well be the most talented in this batch of students. As such, he was disappointed when Yao Chen failed to bring the Blood Stopping pill.

Yao Chen's father, Yao Huo was also a former student of the school and Yao Lan had some recollections of him. Back then, Yao Huo, who had considerable talent in pill refining, but unfortunately had mediocre talent in cultivation was unable to secure the usage of the clan's resources, and as such, was never able to make his talent bloom fully. While this was unfortunate, the medicine clan has never been short on talent, and for every person who's talent was unable to bloom, there was one who succeeded.

However, regardless of how his talent was unable to blossom, Yao Huo's house should have a pill refining room, and Yao Chen should have been able to attempt refining a Blood Stopping pill.

"A perfect pill. How many attempts did this take you?"

Yao Lan started his appraisal of the pills; The first to be appraised – Yao Tong, the best in Dou Qi cultivation in the current batch of students, was a 7 starred Martial Practitioner who had already chosen a skill for the latter stages of his cultivation foundation.

"It took me 3 attempts elder ."

Yao Tong replied courteously.

"Not bad."

Yao Lan nodded his head slightly and shifted his gaze to the next student, without any further words of praise.

"30 percent of side effects, passable. You need to strengthen your control and pay attention to the temperature when filtering."

Basically all the students brought a pill, with even the worst amongst them bringing a swarthy trashy pill."

"Yao Chen, what about you?"

Finally, Yao Lan stood in front of Yao Chen. Although Yao Chen had not produced a pill, Yao Lan could not help but ask out of concern.

"I failed...."

To Yao Chen, since both the Blood Stopping Pill and the Dou Qi Recovering Pill were tier 1 pills, he might as well report the failure instead of the success and see if the elder had any means of rectifying his failure.

"Failed? Where is the pill? I'll help you figure out the reason for the failure"

Yao Lan smiled and said encouragingly.

"There is nothing scary about failure. What's truly terrifying is losing your confidence"

Yao Chen lowered his head.

"Elder, i couldn't make the pill take shape"

""

Yao Lan was shocked; How could it have failed to form? His gut told him that Yao Chen's talent should be pretty good, and was at least comparable to Yao Huo's back then.

"Ahh... It's ok, don't give up, you'll eventually succeed"

Yao Lan coughed lightly, said a few words of encouragement and proceeded with the day's lessons on elementary pill refining. The lesson on elementary pill refining included classifying medical properties, understanding the combination of the different properties, memorising

the various reactions during combination, temperature control of the cauldron, how to use Dou Qi to control ingredients in the midst of reacting, how to make the pill take shape.....

Though the school's elder Yao Lan was only a tier 5 alchemist, there were precious few people in the clan who could match him when it came to teaching the basics to children as he was able to simplify complex concepts and make it easy for the children to absorb.

Originally, Yao Chen was still embarrassed about his failure the previous day, but as the lesson went on, he gradually put it out of his mind. So it could actually be done this way; There actually existed methods to reduce the leakage of Dou Qi, techniques and skills for control that would make the refining process easier when used, and increase the likelihood of the pill forming.

In the afternoon when classes were over, Yao Chen anxiously rushed home, and could barely wait to start his pill refining.

The little fatty Luo Shu had just raised his hand and was not even able to utter a word before Yao Chen rushed out like a gust of wind.

What happened? How could the previous agreement between the both of them to go look at the little demon princess be so easily forgotten? Furthermore, the princess was very pretty, and he had even managed to speak to the princess, promising that he would bring his friend to go visit her. Wouldn't this cause him to break his promise..?

Although, seeing the princess alone wasn't a bad thing at all..... heh heh heh...

As Yao Chen reached home, he found a note left by his mother telling him that she went out picking medicine and that dinner has already been prepared and all he had to do was warm it up. Yao Chen didn't take the trouble of doing so and simply had a few bites to eat before rushing into the pill refining room to continue his refining of the Qi Recovering Pill. The new methods he learnt were of great use, and the temperature of the pill cauldron rose quickly, greatly reducing the leakage of Dou Qi, as the combination of the various ingredients in the cauldron proceeded smoothly.

With everything proceeding so smoothly, Yao Chen had a feeling that he may have a perfect pill refined this time round! It was not just a mere feeling, even with his spiritual perception, he could feel that the refining was proceeding smoothly in the direction of a perfect pill.

Just as the refining was entering its last stages, a blood coloured light suddenly appeared on top of the cauldron and as the light descended, it tainted the ingredients that were currently being processed into a pill by the fierce flames and Dou Qi.

BOOOOMMMM!!!!!!

With a huge bang, the cauldron exploded ! Yao Chen's face grew pale as the force from the explosion blew him backwards where he collided with the wall.

"Cough cough cough..."

Coughing fiercely, Yao Chen could feel that his innards were in disarray

and hurriedly took out the blood stopping pills that he refined and swallowed them. He felt better when the pills covered his innards in cool medical essence, and he rushed forward to the cauldron. The cauldron was something that his father treasured and he fervently hoped that the explosion didn't damage the cauldron.

However, with just a look, Yao Chen's face ashen face grew even paler; There were several deep cracks that were extremely eye – catching on the cauldron.

I'm finished...

This time, i'm going to be beaten for sure....

What Luo Shu admired most about Yao Chen was that he had never once been beaten by his father, while he could scarcely go three days without being beaten.

Yao Chen's heart chilled as he looked at the deep cracks on the cauldron. However, strangely enough, apart from a sense of fear towards being beaten, an uneasy feeling of premonition came over him...

BANG!!!

At this moment, a huge sound came from the courtyard; The sound was so loud that not even the soundproofing in the refining room could block it out, and it was clearly heard by Yao Chen.

Yao Chen's heart jumped as the uneasy feeling in his heart grew

stronger .He composed himself, got to his feet and rushed out towards the courtyard.

Just as he stepped out, he heard several loud and hoarse cries resounding from the courtyard, and when he rushed into the courtyard, he saw a group of people gathered.

"Yao Chen came out..."

"Yao Chen..."

The group of people quieted down when they saw Yao Chen and unconsciously opened a path for him.

Yao Chen's heart chilled as he made his way forward, his footsteps barely registering in his mind as he made his way forward, the uneasy premonition in his heart coalesced into a reality that he never wished to see.

His gentle and humorous father, who always made everyone laugh, the father who would carry him on his shoulders..... was now lying on the ground with his eyes closed and his face pale and ashen. Uncle Luo Bing, together with a group of his father's friends were kneeling and sitting in a corner with their faces contorted in pain, clutching their hair and cradling their faces...

"Yao Chen...we.... we met..."

Luo Bing bit his lips, unable to utter another word.As a guard, they had

to be prepared for sacrifices as they undertook missions for the clan. This was something they all understood and prepared for and yet, when this cruel reality came knocking, they were rendered impotent, not knowing what to do, especially when faced with Yao Chen's young face.

"Judging from the injuries, this should be the work of the Soul Hall.."

"Shhh, words like this cannot be spoken lightly"

"Ahh, what a pity. Yao Huo's talent lay in pill refining but he just had to go be a guard. Now look what happened.."

"From his injuries, even if he were to survive, he would be crippled..."

"BASTARDS!!! WHAT ARE YOU SAYING!!!"

With a loud bang, Yao Huo's brothers leapt to their feet and charged at the group of onlookers.

"Don't be rash! We meant neither harm nor ill will! Right, Yao Chen, where's your mother?"

"That's right, where's Yao Qing?" This group of onlookers were neighbours who lived nearby, and as they realised what they said was inappropriate, they hurriedly changed the topic.

Yao Chen's body trembled as he looked at his father's body..the colour of blood ...was terrifying!

"Cough.."

Suddenly, Yao Huo opened his eyes.

"Old Luo..."

"Old Huo, i'm here.."

"This smell is familiar....are we home..?"

"Yes, yes we are."

"Ahh, Chen-er?"

"DAD!!"

Hearing his father call for him, the floodgates in Yao Chen's eyes opened and tears gushed out as he ran to his father.

"Are you afraid..? Men don't cry"

"But.. blood... there's so much blood"

"Men aren't afraid of blood. Come, let me hold you"

Yao Chen hurriedly moved closer and his tiny hands grasped his father tightly. It was at this moment when he realised that his father's eyes were unresponsive.

"Dad, your eyes.."

"I'm just unable to see temporarily, it's nothing serious"

As Yao Huo's spoke, Luo Bing who was by the side was unable to bear the agony in his heart, with two streams of tears flowing down his cheeks. He knew that Yao Huo's injuries were severe and that it could be considered a miracle that he made it back alive and every word he spoke must be bringing him unimaginable agony. He should be barely be able to speak, yet every word spoken to Yao Chen was articulated clearly.

"Old Huo, you should rest.."

"I'm alright.."

Yao Huo smiled as he stroked his son's face. Yao Chen struggled to hold his tears back as he felt his father gently caressing his face.

"Dad..you'll be fine...right?"

"Ahh, Yao Qing's back."

Suddenly someone shouted from the periphery as everyone hurriedly made room for her to pass.

Yao Chen raised his head and saw his mother, who was dressed simply throw down his medicine basket and rushed over"

"Husband!!"

"Ahh... I'm embarrassed to have let you see me in this sorry state.."

"Don't say anything more. Who did this!!"

Yao Qing lifted her head and looked at Luo Bing.

"We aren't sure either. It was a sneak attack. The opponent used three different methods belonging to the Soul Clan,the Ancient Clan and the Demon Clan."

Luo Bing had already bitten through his lips. What was most hateful was that they didn't even have a target for vengeance.However, luckily everyone was able to make it back...only seeing his good friend lying in such agony, he would rather it was himself that was injured.

"Alright, you can leave now, i don't wish to remain lying on the ground. Cough...."

Yao Huo smiled as he held onto Yao Qing and gently shook his head. Nothing was going to be solved by troubling his friends further.

Yao Qing took a deep breath and nodded. Luo Bing, taking note of the

situation, carefully scooped Yao Huo into his arms and carried him into the bedroom.

Yao Huo smiled softly.

"I'm not a porcelain doll... Relax, i'll be fit as a fiddle in a few days time. You can relax and go home"

Seeing the smile on Yao Huo's face, Luo Bing forced an ugly smile that was scarcely better than crying and bid his farewells.

When everyone had left, two streams of tears immediately appeared on Yao Qing's face.

"I'll get the elder to treat you."

"I've.....already seen him....else..."

Yao Huo shook his head lightly

"Else... i wouldn't be here talking right now"

Yao Qing placed her hand on Yao Huo's wrist and took his pulse and sighed.

"Severe internal injuries?I'll refine some injury treating pills for you. Yao Chen, give me a hand"

"Mom...."

Yao Chen stood dully by the door. He was at a loss when he heard that his mother was going to refine some pills as they only had one pill cauldron at home, and he had wrecked it earlier while practicing.

"Go."

"Mom, i didn't mean it... i accidentally wrecked dad's cauldron... i didn't mean it, i really didn't mean it."

Yao Chen said reluctantly.

Yao Qing froze. The cauldron was spoilt? As the thought of this raced through her mind, she felt her cheeks flush with anger and her throat felt blocked by a foreign object as she shook.

"You...You...What did you say...?"

Yao Chen lowered his head; He had never regretted his actions as much as he did now.

"I was practicing refining just now when i blew up the cauldron and cracked it"

" YOU!!!!!! "

Smack!

Yao Qing's palm landed on Yao Chen's face, though she felt the pain in her heart. She stared at her hand, as she didn't know what came over her and why she had extended her hand but...

Looking at Yao Huo, who had always been strong, who had always been protecting her, who was now lying on the bed had shaken her heart. She was the one who was really at a loss and didn't know what to do. Her calmness just now was only an act to prevent others from seeing how shaken and fragile she really was.

Lying on the bed, Yao Huo coughed.

"Wife, It's just a cauldron, i'll be fine. The child is innocent"

"But...That's your favourite.."

Yao Qing tried to find a reason for her actions but knew deep in her heart that regardless of what happened, she should not have laid hands on her child. Although she did not know how he cracked a tier three cauldron, she knew her son best and was sure that he did not do it out of mischief. After all, in the past she was worried that her son placed too much attention on pill refining and neglected love; If the cauldron exploded, it only meant that the cauldron had reached its limit.

"Qing-er, Iurgh"

Yao Huo smiled, he could feel his wife's confusion and was about to

placate her when suddenly, a bizarre force erupted forth from his chest and entered his body, aggravating the injuries that had begun to stabilize and he spit out a mouthful of blood onto the bed.

"Husband!! What happened !?"

"I...Dual Yin Life Chasing Palm..."

Yao Huo forced the words from his lips and, reaching his limits, fainted.

Chapter 3 – Seeking a Cure

Yao Qing's face changed when she heard about the Dual Yin Life Chasing Palm. Although the technique strikes without leaving a trace, if discovered timely, it could be easily treated by simply expelling it from the body. However if it was left undetected, the venom filled Dou Qi would take root in the victim's body and trigger explosively after a period of time, after which it would be too late for any treatment.

Yao Qing's expression was one of fear and anxiety yet she forcibly calmed herself and quickly opened a secret compartment beside the bed which contained various pills and a variety of medicinal ingredients. These items were accumulated by Yao Huo that were originally meant to be used on Yao Chen, though Yao Qing could not care less about their original purpose now and after concentrating, quickly organized those which had healing properties and, seeing how Yao Huo was unable to eat them, forced them down Yao Huo's throat in a particular order.

Moments later, after the medicine took effect, Yao Huo woke up but was unable to utter a single word and could only move his eyes gently. Just as Yao Huo woke up, another mouthful of blood gushed out from a corner of his mouth; At this moment, he was too weak to even spit the blood out and could only let it spill out of his mouth, forming a pool of blood.

"Quick, roll your father over to his side so that he can spit the blood out."

Yao Qing's nails dug into her palm, causing lines of blood to flow out.

"I'm going to ask the clan elder for help,you stay here and look after your father. His blood....don't let him cho...never mind, just .. be careful ."

The words, though formed, were unable to leave her mouth; Her tears welled up in her eyes yet she forcibly held them back, unwilling to let them fall in front of her son as she told herself that at this point of time, she had to be strong for her son.

Yao Chen nodded his head vigorously and clutched his father tightly with his tiny hands, his body trembling in fear.

Yao Qing flew out of the house. The Dual Yin Life Chasing Palm, a technique with the words Life Chasing in it's name, was not something that could be treated with ordinary means, and could only be cured by divine medicine that were of tier 6 and above. However, tier 6 medicine were a watershed in the medicine clan with medicine below grade 6 freely available to anyone who wanted it. Medicine of tier 6 and above however, were priceless treasures and only the clan leader and a select few core elders had the authority to decide it's usage.

The sun was a little blinding....Yao Qing felt her mind drifting off.She only had a few pancakes since she left home early this morning and after enduring the chilly mountain wind while picking herbs, had originally intended to have a soak in a medicinal bath upon returning home.

Biting her tongue, Yao Qing refocused herself and rushed towards the clan leader's residence. Yao Huo had been a guard for well over a decade and had a record of meritorious service to the clan,in addition,since he was a tier 4 alchemist of some talent with a bright future ahead of him surely the clan leader would save him. After all, if the clan leader was unwilling to use the medicine to save him and were to simply let him

die, it would surely chill the hearts of countless ordinary clansmen once word of it got out.

However, fate moves in mysterious ways, and unexpected circumstances occur.

"The clan leader isn't home, go back"

"He isn't home? Where did the clan leader go?"

Yao Qing asked, kneeling down in front of the clan leader's residence, her face clouded by anxiety. A scenario like this, where she was unable to find the clan leader was what she had feared the most.

"How dare you ! Is the whereabouts of the clan leader something the likes of you can ask about?! "

The guardsman was furious, thinking that she did not believe his words.

At this moment, elder Yao Lan happened to be passing by and upon seeing the situation before him, hurried over to find out what happened.

"Elder Yao Lan, it's not that I do not wish to help her, it's just...*sigh*.. the clan leader really isn't around."

The guardsman paid his respects, the whereabouts of the clan leader was something that he did not dare divulge.

"It's alright, return to your post, i'll take it from here. Yao Qing.. was it? Why are you looking for the clan leader?"

Yao Lan recognised Yao Qing as Yao Huo's wife.

"Elder Yao Lan..."

Yao Qing told him about everything that had happened to Yao Huo.

"He's currently on the verge of death,only a tier 6 medicine..."

"The clan leader is indeed not around at the moment, it's not just him, the elders have all left as well.."

Yao Qing's face contorted into an ugly expression, at this crucial point of time, the clan leader and all the core elders weren't around, having left with the Demon Clan.

Yao Qing's face was ashen. In the past, Yao Lan was the one who taught her the basics of pill refining and she knew his personality extremely well. He was not someone who would deceive her.

Yao Lan fiddled with his fingers, even if they were to send an emergency message to the clan leader asking for permission,it would take at least 2 days while the Dual Yin Life Chasing Palm, once triggered, would be fatal in 6 hours.

"Take me to Yao Huo, let's see if we can preserve his life."

After all, Yao Huo was once a student he took pride in, he would not idly stand by without lending a helping hand.

Upon reaching and seeing Yao Huo's deathly figure lying on the bed, with blood flowing from the corner of his mouth, its colour having changed from a bright crimson to a deep black, the effect of the venom was readily apparent to all.

"Quick, feed these to him"

Yao Lan, without even thinking about it, quickly took out all the medicine he had on him, with many of them being tier 5 medicine that were very precious.

However, this could only temporarily halt the venomous Dou Qi from triggering. While Yao Lan was also an elder, he was an elder of the school and his authority was far from that of the true elders and though he had a generous personality, not even he could produce a tier 6 medicine.

"This is bad, these pills can only preserve his life for only a day, furthermore the medicinal effects have reached their limits and further usage of tier 5 medicine would be useless. However, maybe with the usage of some precious ingredients, we would be able to buy some time.

Yao Lan said this after carefully taking Yao Huo's pulse, after which he wrote down a list of items which would be able to buy Yao Huo some time. However there was something he left unsaid, the items that he wrote down were all incredibly precious and obtaining it was going to be... incredibly tough.

"I'll go plead for them."

"I'll take it from here, the both of you go together"

Yao Lan said, looking at Yao Chen. Yao Qing nodded her head, took Yao Chen into her arms and rushed out.

Yao Chen lay in his mother's embrace, listening to the sound of the wind passing by, the tear streaks on his face were dried up and he seemingly had run out of tears, unable to cry even if he wanted to.

He wanted to ask his mother if his father would be alright yet he was unable to speak the words, afraid of making a single sound. He had never seen his mother's face so pale before and was afraid that if he was to make a single sound, his mother would collapse just like his father.

Yao Qing arrived at the Zhuo family, which was family specialising in medicine that had subordinated itself to the medicine clan centuries ago. The Zhuo family too, had members who were guards, and while they were not exceptionally close to Yao Huo they could still be considered his friends.

The Zhuo family did not reject Yao Qing and welcomed her in, taking out numerous medicinal ingredients and though they were not what Yao Qing was hoping for, they were still rare and precious items. Unfortunately, with Yao Huo's current condition, these items were no longer of any use.

Yao Qing could only bid her farewells and think of alternative solutions. As the Zhuo family sent Yao Qing and her son off, Yao Chen did not utter a word and looked on silently.

After leaving the Zhuo family and arriving at the Li family...the same scenario played out again and while sympathies were offered, they did not acquire any items that could prolong Yao Huo's life.

"It's best if you stop wasting your time and head straight to the clan treasury. The items on your list are not things that we would be able to possess, you know that some of those items.... only people like them, would be able to possess it.

The head of the Li family looked at Yao Chen, his heartstrings being tugged at. As he sent Yao Qing and her son off, he said the words quietly, turned around and left.

Yao Qing's eyes flashed and she bit her lips. Although the pills were priceless without compare, the great Medicine Clan was certain to have quite a few of them held in storage, the only problem was that no one dared to touch medicine of this grade without prior permission from the clan leader or the core elders.

"Let's go to the main families"

The main families of the medicine clan could only be described by the words "unfathomable". Apart from the clan treasury, the main branch families were the only ones who could possibly have such rare and precious items. As for the other branch families, even if they were in the possession of such items, they would hand it over to the clan storehouse

in exchange for contribution points from the clan, or for skills and techniques to boost the strength of their families.

Even if they had such items, it would undoubtedly be a family heirloom that would not to be easily taken out. After all, while sympathising with them was one thing , how many people would actually be willing to extend a helping hand and be capable of such self-sacrifice akin to cutting off a portion of their flesh? Elder Yao Lan was one, but it was precisely of this reason that in his lifetime, he would only be a low ranked elder responsible for the school.

The main families were notorious for being cold and hard to deal with, while the branch families on the other hand, regardless of their status or position in the clan would have their family head to meet with Yao Qing and Yao Chen and even if they were unable to help, would at least extend the courtesy due to fellow members of the clan.

The lofty and aloof main families however, would not deign to treat them as equals, much less respect.

*Begging for medicine? Who do you think you are ? The family head isn't in. Get lost"

It can be seen that the gatekeeper of the eldest family of the main families were harder to deal with and were even more arrogant than even than those of the elders of the clan.

[T/N : Eldest family referring to the eldest son of the main branch/main line of descent"

Though Yao Qing knew that this would happen, at this point of time she

could only grovel and beg.

"Please, i'm begging you. I know third brother is home, i just want to see him.."

"...Fine.. I'll ask for him."

The gatekeeper was a little uncertain after hearing Yao Qing address the third master as third brother and was worried that she really was related to him in some manner.

As Yao Chen looked on, he knew that in his tiny heart that this was his father's last hope and he clenched his little fists tightly. Moments later, the gatekeeper rushed out angrily with his hands raised.

"Get lost! You got me into trouble with the master, he said he doesn't know you. SCRAM!!!"

The gatekeeper threw both mother and son out, and clearly still unsatisfied, slammed the gates shut.

Since the eldest did not wish to meet with her, Yao Qing bit her lips and went to the second of the main families.

"Denied."

The second family was unexpectedly polite; The housekeeper invited Yao Qing and her son in and even offered them tea. However, upon

hearing that they were here to beg for medicine, simply said

"Ahh, there is no one here that has the authority to decide. I'm just a mere housekeeper, I wish I could help you... please leave."

Yao Qing was panicking at this moment and dropped to her knees, her lips were trembling yet she was unable to utter a word and could only plead with her tearful eyes. Ever since she was young, apart from her parents and clan memorials, who else had she ever knelt to?

"Don't do this, I'm not worthy."

The housekeeper sighed but remained unmoved, and with another utterance of 'I wish I could help', sent Yao Qing and her son off.

The chilly wind blew past, sweeping leaves into the air. This was the way of the world, people could care less about you if you were a nobody..

Yao Qing smiled bitterly.

"Chen-er, let's go home"

Yao Chen tightened his lips.

"Mom..."

Yao Chen's voice was akin to that of rocks grating together in a bon fire.

"Those medicine...."

"We'll go back and think of something. Maybe the clan leader or the elders will return before daybreak."

Yao Qing bit back the sadness in her heart and told her son.

"Mmhmm"

Yao Chen's uneasiness in his heart had already reached its limit, but he could do nothing, and there was nothing he could do. He lowered his head and looked at his tiny fist. Power, if only he had sufficient power, who would dare turn his mother and him away?

The sky had darkened and the mansions of the main families had already lit up lanterns. Looking back at the mansions of the main branch in the darkness, they emitted a sense of majesty.

Yao Chen looked at his tiny fists and made a promise to himself. When he grew up, he had to become somebody of note, someone with enough power and influence that nobody dared overlook, someone that his parents could be proud of.

When they returned home, elder Yao Lan was in the midst of refining medicine. Luo Bing, in addition of a few of his father's brothers were also present.

"You didn't get the items....? *Sigh* ..."

With a gesture from Yao Lan, five pills flew out from the cauldron and into the bottle he held in his hands. Turning around, he said to Yao Qing:

"These five pills.... will let him pull through the night, and do not need to be taken now. Wait till he wakes up before feeding him one, and another pill every 2 hours afterwards.... I've already sent a message via eagle and if we're lucky, maybe, the clan leader and the rest will..... *sigh*, i'm returning home.."

Yao Lan shook his head; He had already tried his best and did not have it in his heart to bear witness to this any further

"Many thanks to elder Yao Lan for this medicine. Yao Qing will never forget this in my life... Yao Chen, on your knees!"

Yao Qing knelt in gratitude. After her experience while begging for medicine, and the sight of Yao Lan trying his utmost, the feeling in her heart was not something that could be expressed with words.

Luo Bing and the rest knelt down as well, with their brother in trouble and them being unable to help, how could the pain they felt in their hearts could not be expressed with mere words? A man has gold under his knees, and while it was not unacceptable for a man to knee, it had to be to someone who was worthy, or a cause that was just!

"It's ok, what are you all doing?! Get up!! Are my words worthless? All of you... *sigh* .. Yao Huo was a student of mine, how can i simply leave him in

the lurch without helping him? It's just that my efforts...are not enough ..."

Yao Lan help Yao Qing and her son to their feet, and with a shake of his head, turned around and left.

Luo Bing and the rest got to their feet and looked at Yao Qing and her son silently. They too, went around asking for medicine and making use of the guard's network, were able to procure a sizable amount of medicinal ingredients. But alas, what they had procured had its limitations and had scant effect treating the Dual Yin Life Chasing Palm. It was only through Yao Lan's refining that they were able to obtain the 5 pills to prolong Yao Huo's life.

"Everyone please return... i will not forget your kind assistance today.."

With a soft sigh, Yao Qing forced out the ugliest smile of her life.

"Sis in law..."

Luo Bing shook his head.

"Let's go"

Everyone was clear that Yao Huo did not have much time left and since everyone wished to help but were unable to do so, the only thing left to do was to let them spend what remaining time was left as a family.

After sending everyone off, weariness showed on Yao Qing's ashen face

and she threw herself onto the bed, her slim hands tightly holding onto Yao Huo's arms. Yao Qing's eyes flashed, the greatest pain in life was the separation of death, and she wished that she could accompany Yao Huo in death.

"Mom!! Don't die!!"

Suddenly, Yao Chen's tender voice anxiously sounded out from the side.

Yao Qing jolted, her eyes regaining their clarity

"Mom won't die, mom's alright....just a little tired"

Yao Qing straightened her body despite being exhausted physically and mentally; After seeing Yao Chen who was still so little, she could not help but pull herself together.

"Mom!!"

Yao Chen rushed forward, his tiny hands grabbing onto her clothes

The room quietened down and the cries of insects could be heard from outside. Yao Chen could still hold himself together without breaking down because he was still able to hear the faint sounds of his father's breathing, realising what the term pillar of support really meant.

[TN: His father's breathing is the pillar supporting him]

Cough..

Suddenly, the sound of coughing could be heard

"Father!"

Yao Chen jerked his head up.

Yao Qing sobbed yet did not utter a single word and instead hurriedly took out one of the pills Yao Lan gave her earlier and placed it in Yao Huo's mouth.

Yao Huo swallowed it.

"Life prolonging pill..?"

"Mmmhmm"

Yao Qing's vision clouded up again upon hearing her husband's voice and fat tears started falling once more.

"Chen-er? Is your mother crying? I can't see clearly.."

"Mom.."

"I'm fine, you promised me that you will never make me cry in my lifetime, so i definitely won't cry"

"It's nothing, i'll be fine. Chen-er did you practice tonight?"

"I..."

"Go. Don't come back till you've finished 10 revolutions"

Yao Qing caressed Yao Chen's head, knowing that her husband wished to talk to her privately. Yao Chen seemed to understand what was going on as he nodded his head and shuffled out the door.

As he reached the centre of the courtyard, Yao Chen looked up at the sky, the stars and the moon and as the cold wind blew, his body trembled as his heart ached and the tears that he thought had dried up started flowing once more.

As he wiped away the last of his tears, he told himself that he today, he would finish up his lifetime's worth of tears today and would never shed another drop of tear ever again from this day forth.

He forced himself into a meditative state and felt the Dou Qi in his body start circulating as it completed revolution after revolution. He had only finished half of the ten revolutions when he heard footsteps coming from the room. He turned around and saw his mother support his father as he walked out.

Yao Qing gestured with her hand.

"Chen-er, come over"

"Father, Mother"

Yao Huo extended his arm, gently bringing it to rest on Yao Chen's shoulder and shook it slightly.

"Accompany me to the ancestral stone stele to have a look together as a family alright?"

"Ok"

Yao Qing turned around, lifted Yao Huo onto her back and slowly headed to the mountain summit step by step.

Yao Chen followed behind and heard his father said laughingly

"When i first married you, in the beginning, i was the one carrying you and now at the very end, you're the one carrying me as you send me off.."

"Quiet. You're not allowed to talk"

Yao Qing's body shook. Even at this point of time, he was still as garrulous and sharp tongued as ever.

Yao Chen had his head lowered as he followed behind; This path was one that he took everyday as he walked to school but he had never felt as he did now, with each step he took seemingly weighing a ton, as if the path was cursed and was devouring everything.

Suddenly, the footsteps stopped and Yao Chen raised his head. They had arrived at the stone stele.

It was late at night and the public square was empty; Perhaps there might be guards hidden in the dark but onlookers would realise what was going on , and they did not have any intention of showing themselves.

At this moment, Yao Huo's eyes suddenly brightened up and he seemed to be full of vigour suddenly.

Yao Qing's face changed as she knew this to be just a momentary recovery before death.

Yao Huo took the medicinal pills, finished them in one gulp and gently pushed Yao Qing away. It was unknown where he got the strength as he walked to the stele and extended his hand to caress it, the stele was cold yet his touch blazed with fervent longing.

"Chen-er!"

Yao Huo turned around fiercely, his eyes glimmered as he suppressed the desire in his eyes.

"Father"

"Do you know what this is?"

"I know.."

"What is it?"

Yao Huo insisted on Yao Chen saying the name of the object.

"The ancestral clan stele"

"Louder!!"

"THE ANCESTRAL CLAN STELE!!"

"Good, very good... Chen-er, in this lifetime, i am satisfied having had a gentle wife like your mother, and know that i have not lived in vain. However, my only regret is that i have not had the chance to carve my name here. An outstanding man in life, a valiant ghost in death; Chen-er, i place my hopes in your hands. In the past, at this very same spot, my father too passed this same wish to me, yet i could not accomplish it..."

Yao Huo's voice grew softer and out of the blue, his legs quivered and he fell to the ground, his back leaning against the stele and the light in his eyes grew dimmer as the poisonous Dou Qi in his body flared up again.

"Dad!!"

Yao Chen rushed forward and hugged his father as he understood in his tiny heart that the final moment....had arrived.

"I'm tired, let me rest a little"

Yao Huo's rough hands gently rubbed Yao Chen's face as his eyes closed. Suddenly, as if he thought of something, his mouth opened slightly and Yao Chen hurriedly brought his ears closer as he heard his father speak softly.

"Chen-er, your mom did not mean to hit you today. In the future, you must listen to her and protect her"

As he finished, his voice grew fainter...

Yao Chen nodded his head as if his life depended on it.

"I will, i will...."

The first rays of dawn breaks, and the horizon lights up.

The sun rises.

Father has stopped moving, and his breath could no longer be heard.

Yao Chen could only feel a tempestuous surge of blood rushing to his larynx....

Yao Chen's dimmed and he could only feel that in his body, his Dou Qi

was surging and growing wildly.

Ka-cha

At this moment, the realm that he was originally stuck in was forcibly broken by the wildly surging energy in him, seventh realm, 8th realm, 9th realm...

Yao Qing's face abruptly changed.

"Chen-er, NO!!!!"

Yao Qing rushed towards Yao Chen and pressed a palm against him as a stream of sealing Dou Qi gushed into his body. At this very moment, she could not care less about her grief, Yao Chen's advancement at this point of time was not a good thing.

This was akin to a demonic disintegration as an sudden advancement like this would consume his latent potential.

Blessings never come in pairs, and misfortunes never come singly.

Time, would always be the best medicine.

Chapter 4 – Tigerflame Grass

Regardless of how agonising it was, time will heal all wounds leaving behind only a crooked scar to serve as a reminder of what had happened. Afterwards, when looking at the scar, the agony felt in one's heart will not be as intense as it was back then.

Two years later...

A lanky youth sat atop a bell tower facing the morning rays, gazing at the distant public square and the ancestral stele in it with desire in his eyes.

"Brother Chen, i knew you'd be here."

In the direction of the voice was a chubby youth huffing and puffing as he clambered onto the roof from the bell tower smiling as he rushed towards the lanky youth.

"Right, there's news on the whereabouts of the TigerFlame Grass that you wanted my help in finding last time, my brother picked some as he was returning from his training."

The youth's eyes lit up.

"Really? i can trade an AzureFlame Pill for it"

The chubby youth shook his head.

“There’s no need to trade for it. My brother has said that if brother Chen has need of it , you can just take it. It’s not a particularly precious ingredient anyways, it’s just that one needs to exchange contribution points for it in the medicine clan so it’s inconvenient for brother Chen. However, brother Chen, you’ve gathered so many good materials this year, are you planning on participating in the medicine tournament?”

The lanky youth in question was Yao Chen who upon hearing what was said, turned around and gazed deeply at the majestic ancestral clan stele. Before his father’s death, his father had brought him to the stele and the meaning of his actions were understood by Yao Chen who was now fifteen.

He nodded his head.

“This is a chance, if i can prove myself in this tournament, maybe i can....Hehe Luo Shu, let’s go”

The medicine tournament was a very important event in the medicine clan that was held every five years, that was open to all of the clan’s youths below the age of twenty four. In the tournament, the youths compete with their skill in refining and the eventual champion would be crowned the number one alchemist which to the clan’s youth, was a honor beyond compare.

The chubby youth was Yao Chen’s childhood playmate Luo Shu, who for reasons unknown, had taken a liking to shadowing Yao Chen in the past two years. If Yao Chen wanted him to go west, he would never go east and not even his father and brothers could get him to do otherwise.

Luo Shu's eyes flashed as he too gazed at the ancestral stele, the look in his eyes was one akin to that of pious devotion and reverent worship. In the Medicine Clan, regardless of whether one's surname was Yao, everyone held the act of carving their name onto the stele as the greatest honour.

[TN: Yao = medicine]

However....Luo Shu rubbed his tummy and said :

"Brother Chen, no matter how good the stele is, it can't fill our tummies. Let's go back for some food, i'm famished."

Rumble rumble

Luo Shu's tummy growled, seemingly agreeing with what he said.

Yao Chen smiled as he nodded his head

"Alright, let's return"

Luo Shu nodded his head happily and talked about the dinner dishes with Yao Chen as they walked home.

"Aunt Qing is cooking braised fish, and braised rabbit; There's plenty to go around so don't finish everything later and leave some for later in the day when we can get some bamboo wine. It'll make a perfect supper, hehe... remember not to let yourself go"

"Letting yourself go, don't you mean stop getting fat?"

Yao Chen smiled as he shook his head

Generally speaking, Luo Shu would never dispute what Yao Chen says with the sole exception being the topic of his body. When Luo Shu heard the word fat he flared up, disputing what Yao Chen said.

"Brother Chen, you don't understand, this is just baby fat. Back then my brother was even fatter than me, yet he's handsome and dashing now"

"I can't be bothered with you"

Yao Chen shook his head.

As the both of them reached the alleyway leading home, Yao Chen saw his mother standing at the entrance, looking towards them.

Yao Chen quickened his footsteps.

"Mom, i'm back"

"Aunt Qing, is dinner ready?"

Luo Shu's drool was spilling out of his mouth, it had long become a habit of his to come to Yao Chen's house for dinner.

Yao Qing's smooth laughter rang out.

"Have you washed your hands?"

"Yes, isn't that right Yao Chen?"

Only after seeing Yao Chen nod his head did Yao Qing speak.

"Alright, dinner is served."

Kids in puberty bankrupt their families; Yao Chen and Luo Shu were at the age of puberty and like a raging storm, devoured the dishes on the table till not even a scrap was left.

Luo Shu was rubbing his tummy, gazing at the empty table when he suddenly remembered that he originally wanted to save some braised rabbit for supper.

"Aunt Qing...."

Luo Shu turned towards Yao Qing eagerly

"Relax, there's still plenty left in the pot"

"Yay, c'mon Yao Chen, let's head to my place for some fun"

Luo Shu jumped to his feet and pulled Yao Chen outside.

"Yao Chen, don't forget that we'll be testing your Dou Qi's progress tonight"

Yao Qing's quickly withdrew her smile, her voice becoming stern.

After his father passed away, his originally gentle mother became strict, especially when it came to his cultivation. Two years ago Yao Chen explosively advanced his cultivation level though the side effects of it caused his meridians to be thrown into disorderly chaos for two years and also caused damage to his innate talent potential.

"I know mom, i'll be back soon."

Yao Chen nodded his head and followed Luo Shu, whose house was just past the courtyard.

It was dinner time and Luo Shu's family was having dinner too, however the dishes on their tables was pitiful in comparison with there only being a plate of white mantou without any accompanying dishes. As for meat, if they wanted it they had to go hunt for it themselves in the mountains out back and could only eat what they had personally hunted, and could not share it. This was considered training and had already become part of Luo Shu's family's rules. To be honest, with Luo Shu's figure, if he did not eat at Yao Chen's house, he would probably never be able to eat meat in his life.

"You're back? Have you eaten? Come, eat this. I heard it's more effective

if taken after food.”

The one who spoke was Luo Bing, faint guilt could be seen in his eyes as he took out a bottle and passed it to Yao Chen.

“Thank you Uncle Luo”

Yao Chen nodded his head without standing on ceremony as he opened the bottle containing a thumb sized pill, a strange scent spreading out from the bottle as he did so. He swallowed the pill with a gulp and as the pill was swallowed, it seeped into the bottom of his heart where waves of medicinal power were absorbed into his meridians.

This was the Root Solidifying Musk pill, it wasn't an ordinary pill and could strengthen the Dantian's circulation and increase the amount of Dou Qi. Disciples of the Medicine Clan could acquire one from the clan treasury every month.

After the incident two years ago, Luo Bing resigned as a guardsman and was now a squad leader of the clan's guardians. With his past as a guardsman and the authority he now had as a squad leader added together, he had the special right to receive 5 Root Solidifying Musk Pill from the clan storehouse every month.

He would give the pills he acquired every month to Yao Chen, this was the only way to assist that he could think of.

After Yao Chen's father passed away, the clan's resources that would be allocated to a branch family member like Yao Chen reduced and were it

not for the assistance of Yao Huo's brothers in the guards, someone who had his Dou qi Run amok like Yao Chen would never be able to cultivate again.

If was precisely because of this assistance that Yao Chen was able to recover during the past two years.

Yao Chen closed his eyes as he felt his meridians absorb the medicine and as he opened his eyes, he saw Luo Bing's face break out into a smile.

"Not bad, you only need one incense's time to absorb the medicine, far better than Luo Shu that good for nothing"

The chubby Luo Shu laughed

"Since i have Brother Chen looking after me in the future, why not give him my share as well?"

"Rubbish, though the Root Solidifying Musk Pill is good, a maximum of two can be taken per month. Do you think medicinal pills can be eaten as you wish?"

Luo Bing glared at Luo Shu angrily.

Actually, it is not impossible to take more of the pills however, all medicine are three parts toxins and medicinal pills are no exception. Without additional pills to counter the effects of the toxins, though one might have vast improvements if they were to consume the pills excessively, it would cause naught but harm in the long run.

Disciples of the main branch or branch families with power and influence will naturally have pills to counter the toxins given to them however for ordinary branch family members like them, one Root Solidifying Musk Pill every three months would be considered a great benevolence, let alone the antidote pill that was even more precious.

Yao Chen smiled as he showed his thanks to Luo Bing.

"Thank you Uncle Luo"

Luo bing nodded his head and patted Yao Chen's shoulder as if he had

more to say but after a few twitches of his lips, held himself back.

“Right, i still have things to do and i’ll be making a move. You guys have fun.”

Once Luo Bing left, Luo Shu ran to his brother Luo Shan.

“Hey hey , bro where’s the TigerFlame Grass?”

Yao Chen looked at Luo Shan with anticipation, since two years ago, he had been preparing for the upcoming medicine tournament .

Actually, the majority of the preparations was done by Yao Huo, but he passed away before he had a chance to tell Yao Chen about the tournament.

No matter how much preparation was done, it would never be enough. In the Medicine Clan, geniuses are a dime a dozen and if one wants to fully display his abilities, simply relying on the ordinary medicinal ingredients provided would be impossible even for a world shaking genius. Only with meticulous preparation and by refining a special pill would one be able to stand out from the crowd.

However, Yao Chen was a branch family member and though his daily necessities were taken care of by the clan after his father’s death, acquiring special and rare materials for the tournament was incomparably tough and even with the help of his father’s brothers in the two years, Yao Chen was still lacking several special materials .

The TigerFlame Grass was among the hardest to acquire, and one could not exchange contribution points for it as even the clan treasury was facing a shortage. Rumour had it that recently the pills a clan elder was refining needed huge quantities of the TigerFlame Grass and the existing stock in the treasury had all been taken by him.

Luo Shan was Luo Shu's elder brother, he was twenty this year and had a steady personality and could already take charge of a sector in the medicine clan. A tiger does not beget a dog, and Luo Shan takes after his father. He was already a nine starred Martial Practitioner and could advance to a Martial GrandMaster at any time now. Few could compare to him amongst the clan's youth as he possesses not just martial prowess but was also calm and decisive, completing numerous missions with ease and had already been chosen as a clan guardian. With his potential, it was not a problem for him to become a squad leader like his father or even a guardsman that needed stricter requirements.

Luo Shan smiled at Yao Chen.

"There are fluctuations in your Dou Qi, two years have passed... it should be time for you to attempt advancing to a Martial Practitioner?"

Yao Chen nodded his head lightly. Advancing to the Martial Practitioner level at the age of 15 was only average however, in the past two years due to his foundation being damaged, Yao Chen directed his cultivation towards his soul perception and sensitivity instead of Dou Qi.

In pill refining, what is most important was neither precious and exquisite materials nor was it the flame used but the control over the flame used and this control was not something that was dependent on experience. Perhaps for ordinary pills, one could refine it hundreds or

thousands of times and gain a semblance of competence through experience, however for high tier pills where just collecting the ingredients would take a year, repeated refinings of hundreds or thousands of times were out of the question and one could only rely on his spiritual sense for the refining.

Yao Chen's spiritual sense was extraordinary since young and it was precisely because of this reason that his father had devised a strict training regime with regards to his spiritual sense. Due to him concentrating on his spiritual sense, Yao Chen's Dou Qi cultivation had lagged behind though he could still be ranked amongst the middle among the youths of the branch families. However when compared to the geniuses of the main branch, the difference was akin to the distance between heaven and earth.

"Work hard, Yao Feng and Yao Xiu who are the same age as you are already three starred Martial Masters"

Luo Shan nodded his head and pulled out a half jade case; This was a half Dou stone and half Dou jade case that had medicinal preserving properties.

Luo Shu stuck his tongue out

"Bro, Yao Feng is from the main branch, who knows how many Root Solidifying Musk Pills he takes a month? Brother Chen can only take two pills a month so how can you compare the both of them? Why don't you use Yao Wan Gui for comparison? I heard that he's already a two starred Martial GrandMaster"

Luo Shan shook his head, gave Luo Shu's forehead a knock and without another word, opened the jade case. Inside the case were over 10 pieces of a strange red coloured grass that was faintly emitting heat with shadows of a tiger moving.

Upon seeing the tiger shadows, Yao Chen's eyes lit up and he took the jade case.

"This.... is top grade TigerFlame Grass?"

Tiger shadows can be seen on high grade TigerFlame Grass, though the shadows are unmoving; Moving shadows are indicative of Top grade TigerFlame Grass

Luo Shan nodded his head

"I had good luck this time and managed to pick quite a few top grade ones. The majority have been handed over to the clan treasury but i've saved some for you so work hard for the tournament this time round"

"Brother Shan, thanks"

Yao Chen was deeply touched, with the top grade TigerFlame Grass in hand,he had confidence in his chances at the tournament. However, he did not know what he could use to repay the favor,the AzureFlame Pill... was the only pill that he had, but it was nothing compared to the value of the top grade TigerFlame Grass.

"No need for thanks, others may not know about your real ability nor am i clear on it so take it as an investment in you. When you've become a tier 5 alchemist, just refine a few tier 5 pills for me and i'll have recouped my investment."

Luo Shu laughed heartily

“Tier 5? Brother Chen will become a tier 7 alchemist”

Luo Shan started laughing as well

“That’s right, one should be more ambitious, i’ve looked down on you”

Yao Chen laughed as well

"Since it's good to be ambitious, why not aim for tier 9?"

Luo Shu and Luo Shan however, did not laugh; In the medicine clan, only the clan leader Yao Dan was a rank 9 receptarier.

"Would.... this be aiming far too high?"

Yao Chen rubbed his nose, seemingly embarrassed.

"Duh!! "

Luo Shan, who was normally calm and steady jokingly admonished Yao Chen.

"You just simply... don't know your limits"

[TN:Literal translation is how high the heavens are and how thick the earth is, the expression should be familiar to all y'all]

Luo Shu said loudly

Yao Chen smiled, if he knew his limits, how would he carve his parent's name onto the stele? On the stele, in the tens of thousands of years that passed, how many branch family members were able to carve their names on the stele?

Amidst the thousand plus names on the stele, the ones born from the branch families only numbered in the tens.

Branch family disciples who wished to carved their names on the stele must not only be outstanding, they must contribute more.....after all the ancestral stele was the highest honour in the clan!

After acquiring the TigerFlame Grass, the pressure on Yao Chen's to acquire materials had lessened considerably since he already had the whereabouts of the items and only had to use sufficient pills to exchange for them.

The three of them played around for awhile when Luo Shu rubbed his stomach, although he wasn't hungry he felt the craving for food and wanted a bite to eat

"Let's go brother Chen, it's time for supper. Elder brother you coming?"

Luo Shan shook his head, smiling

"I want to but i've got a night patrol mission. You guys go ahead"

"Let's go"

The two of them were neighbours and the path back was less than a hundred metres long. Yao Chen held the TigerFlame Grass, looking at it as he walked. Top grade TigerFlame Grass was very delicate and had to be watered with dew after picking to maintain its top grade medicinal properties.

At this moment, Yao Chen notices some irregularities in the movement of the tiger shadows and knew that it was time to water it with dew and he told Luo Shu so.

"Hold on, it should be time to water it, you go on ahead, i'll go to a corner to water it"

For outsiders, if they wanted to acquire dew, they had to head deep into the mountains before the sun rises to acquire it. However for members of the medicine clan, it was as simple as using a pill. The morning dew pill was a tier 1 medicinal pill and Yao Chen brought it with him wherever he left home; He took a pill out and walked towards a waterway by the side.

The waterway was links springs together and had a formation as it's core. It was spread throughout the clan and had was purified and had its odour removed by the formation and every household could use the water for their daily needs.

Yao Chen used a bottle for storing pills to scoop some water up, crushed the morning dew pill into powder and threw it into the bottle. Once it reacts with the water, the pill would take effect and transform the

water in the bottle into dew.

Yao Chen opened the jade case once more, and with the aid of his dou qi, carefully dripped the dew onto the TigerFlame Grass.

Just as the last dewdrop touched the TigerFlame Grass, a sound rang out from a road branching off into the sides and Yao Chen's face changed when he saw a bunch of youths walking over. The youths were schoolmates of his, though their relationship was not amicable.

"Eh? Yao Chen?"

"Huh? TigerFlame Grass ! Top grade TigerFlame Grass!"

The youths were stunned when they saw the Top grade TigerFlame Grass in Yao Chen's hands, and some of them even rubbed their eyes to get a better look. Yao Chen was a renowned pauper in school, where did he get the TigerFlame Grass?

Perhaps he used contribution points to exchange for it? However....

"That can't be right, i remember the TigerFlame Grass in the clan storehouse have all been taken by the elder to refine, you shouldn't be able to trade for it."

"Hey Yao Chen, where did your TigerFlame Grass come from?"

"You... didn't steal it did you? You've got guts Yao Chen, how dare you

steal from the elder!!”

Young people are meddlesome by nature and would make a mountain out of a molehill when bored; They were unable to maintain their calm when they saw the TigerFlame Grass in Yao Chen’s hands and started shouting.

Luo Shu who was waiting for Yao Chen nearby heard them and rushed over, incensed.

“Bullshit, my elder brother brought this back when he returned from outside the clan, maligning a fellow clansmen without evidence is a serious offence”

“What did you say, you damned fatty?!”

“Serious my ass, beat him!!”

They were all young and hot-headed, what was reason to them? Reason was talking after they had finished fighting, reason would be with the party that had the bigger fist.

The group of youths charged together with their Dou Qi circulating, yet it was not a mindless brawl as they moved together in sync, separating Yao Chen and Luo Shu before continuously attacking.

These youths only had a Dou Qi level of a 8 or 9 starred Martial Practitioner, but had the advantage of numbers and at this moment,they were using the combination attacks taught in school and knocked both

Yao Chen and Luo Shu to the ground shortly.

Yao Chen roared angrily as a wave of power surged forth in his body; The explosive surge that damaged his foundations two years ago had some advantages as a huge power lay hidden in his body after having been sealed for two years.

"Die!!!"

Luo Shu covered his head and with a roar, hugged someone and bit down on him.

"Owowowowowowow....he's biting me!!"

Yao Chen's cheek muscles twisted and he was about to counterattack with everything he had when all of a sudden...

"What are all of you doing!!!"

The sound of someone berating them rang out

"Aunt Qing, help us!!"

The little fatty who was so valiant moments ago stopped biting and yelled.

The one who arrived was Yao Qing who had heard the shouts coming

from outside.

When the youths saw an adult appear, they scrambled away in a flurry and in scant moments, not a trace of them could be found.

Yao Qing hurried over and after checking Luo Shu, walked over to Yao Chen

"Are you alright?"

"Mmmhmm, i just took a few punches"

Yao Chen nodded

Yao Qing was unconvinced and took Yao Chen's pulse, relaxing only when she could not find any irregularities in his Dou Qi.

"Before we finish the final step, remember to not get into a fight with others, no matter how tough it is, you must not get into a fight"

Yao Chen nodded his head and answered

"Mmhmm, i understand"

Luo Shu was at a loss as he turned around and saw Yao Chen

"Brother Chen, this isn't fair! Why is my face swollen , and yet you're fine?"

"That's because your face was originally fat to the point of being swollen"

"What about my bruise?"

Luo Shu grabbed the back of his head, however much he thought about it, it just didn't seem right.

Chapter 5 – The School Competition

Luo Shu was ecstatic after the fight and after helping himself to some meat and wine, started babbling about how he was going to slim down and strengthen himself before finally talking about the Demon clan's little princess.

"I'm really friends with her yet you all don't believe me. Do you know why i don't want to slim down? It's because if i slim down, i'm afraid she won't be able to recognise me....urgh..."

Luo Shu collapsed drunkenly without even realising that Yao Chen had not taken even a single sip of the wine.

Yao Chen smiled faintly as he was well acquainted with Luo Shu's behavior when drunk. Luo Shu had his own troubles as well; He was born lazy and though he wanted to change, it was his inborn nature after all, how could it be changed that easily? To put it bluntly, it could be said that a leopard never changes its spots.

After settling Luo Shu who was dead drunk, Yao Chen arrived at the pill refining room at the backyard. At this moment, Yao Qing was inside the room staring dazedly at the items in the room with her hair tied up with a jade green hairpin.

"Mom, Luo Shu's drunk."

"Hah.."

Yao Qing nodded her head, tenderness flashing across her eyes though she soon composed herself.

"Let's begin"

"Alright, mother."

Yao Chen nodded his head, closed the door and turned around after taking a deep breath.

Yao Qing lightly pressed a shelf, causing a Dou Qi ripple, and a loud click was heard as a mechanism activated and the floor split open, revealing a large hole. This was the family's room for closed cultivation.

"Enter."

With Yao Qing in front and Yao Chen following behind, both mother and son walked into the hole and after descending, saw a cultivation room. The room contained an exquisite refining cauldron and a shelf for various medicinal ingredients, though it was currently empty.

There was another small door on the eastern wall of the room and past this door was yet another room for closed cultivation. This room contained a stone table, stone bed and a stone chair, with various foodstuffs that could be kept for prolonged periods of time in a corner and in another corner was a water tank that drew on underground springs.

Right in the middle of the room was a water filled drum that was being

heated geothermally with violet fog spilling out of the drum onto the ground.

Yao Chen swallowed his saliva as his body twitched unconsciously. The water in the drum was called Cleansing Dew and after being heated geothermally for seven days in addition to having a special medicinal powder added to it, would produce a medicated bath that would cleanse a person's marrow and wash their bones. Soaking in this bath would be immensely beneficial for a person's constitution, their Dou Qi and their spiritual perception.

However, soaking in this bath causes intense itchiness that cannot be scratched as scratching would intensify the itchiness and cause blisters that take a long time to fade.

Yao Qing poured two types of medicinal powder into the drum and soon enough, the water in the drum began frothing and bubbling vigorously producing violet fog, indicating that the Cleansing Dew had reacted with the powder.

"Go in, this time you have to endure for 4 hours."

"Yes"

Yao Chen nodded his head. Last time, Yao Chen had endured for 5 hours and had almost ended up scratching himself due to the intense itchiness though he had reaped great rewards in the end. Although his power has been suppressed to the 9 star Martial Practitioner level for the past two years, in reality his body's constitution has already reached the stage where it can withstand the power of a Martial GrandAster ! This was due

mainly to him persistently using the medicated bath.

Yao Chen took a deep breath, bit his lips and entered the bath. He felt the heat from the water open up his pores and the medicine enter his body through the opened pores starting from his muscles, his blood vessels, then his organs and viscera before finally entering his bone marrow.

The comfortable feeling of the medicine entering his body lasted for a few short breaths before a wave of heat surged up from the bottom of the drum and in a flash, a slight itchiness began to come from his waist before spreading out and covering his body as the itchiness intensified.

Yao Chen's face was unchanged as he had long become accustomed to this itchiness, and the truly terrifying bit was yet to come.

After a while, a wave of Dou Qi fluctuated from his marrow indicating the medicine had permeated his Dou Qi and in an instant his limbs started itching intensely. This was an unbearable and indescribable feeling akin to millions of vicious insects covering his skin, burrowing into his body.

"Urghhh..."

Yao Chen's facial features contorted as he silently endured, after all itchiness was better than pain and shouting out would not ease his suffering but would instead only make it worse. He could only endure it till the end!

On that night two years ago, Yao Chen's sorrow and thirst for strength allowed him to forcibly rise from a six starred Martial Practitioner to a

nine starred Martial Practitioner in a state of demonic possession. However in the process of doing so, over half his potential was burnt away and if his mother had not intervened and sealed his Dou Di and had instead let him advance to a Martial Master, he would forever be stuck at the level of a Martial Master in his life.

Since his potential was overdrawn, it had to be paid back and apart from strengthening his body, the medicinal bath's purpose was to restore the potential that was burnt away two years ago.

The night passed silently and the next day, Yao Chen was awakened by Luo Shu's shouting. The four hour bath he had last night had exhausted him physically and mentally beyond his expectations.

"Stop sleeping, today's the selection for the medicine tournament"

Although anyone below the age of twenty four could participate in the tournament in reality, to separate the wheat from the chaff and to make things easier for the elders in charge of testing, there were several rounds of selections before the official tournament to ensure that only the most outstanding youths would appear on the tournament stage.

If Yao Chen wanted to stand out from the crowd, apart from making various preparations, he also had to pass numerous obstacles.

The first obstacle was the school competition! Students from the main families had a special privilege as they were carefully nurtured and their levels were something that were known by everyone, therefore they did not need to participate in the school competition to qualify for the tournament.

However, students from the various branch families were different as they were extremely numerous and the outstanding students were mixed with those who were abysmal and as such, every time the tournament drew near, the school would test them to see if they qualified for the tournament.

Yao Chen and Luo Shu arrived at the school's testing grounds in a rush. The testing ground was filled to the brim with students as it wasn't only their batch of students who could participate in the tournament as their seniors and juniors were also able to participate.

Yao Chen's position in the school rankings is situated near the bottom and he was one of those who did not have much attention paid to them.

Luo Shu was extremely nervous, though naturally he wasn't worrying about himself but Yao Chen. Although the medicine tournament was extremely prestigious, he did not think much of it because he had always concentrated on his Dou Qi cultivation instead of medicine although as a member of the medicine clan he too had some rudimentary knowledge of pill refining and was able to refine the Blood Stopping Pill and Qi Recovering Pill. Luo Shu's way of thinking was simple as he planned on working hard on his cultivation and once he reached the level of Martial Master, he would be able to join his elder brother Luo Shan as a clan guardian and make a simple living following him. Furthermore, whenever he was bored and had nothing to do, he could simply get Yao Chen to refine a few pills and go out to the outside world and trade them for interesting stuff as everyone knew that the Medicine Clan's pills were in high demand in the outside world.

At the moment, Luo Shu was worried about Yao Chen because the

school's tests were extremely strict and though Yao Chen came prepared, he was only a nine starred Martial Practitioner while the outstanding people in the school were all one or two starred Martial Masters.

Martial Practitioners and Martial Masters were only separated by one level, but in reality the difference between them was akin to the difference between heaven and earth and there was no way they could be compared together.

While spiritual perception is of utmost importance to a alchemist, Dou Qi strength also plays an important part as the strength determines the quality of the flame produced and a weak flame affects the both the success rate and speed of refining. As such, numerous high tier pills are impossible to refine without a certain level of flame and strength.

In the medicine clan, ninety nine percent of the clansmen's Dou Qi are of the flame attribute. Two years ago, Yao Chen did not listen to his father telling him to choose the best cultivation method and instead choose the TriFlower Flame Concentrating method which was one of the three great public cultivation methods available in the clan, however it was the worst of the bunch with almost no one choosing to use this method in their cultivation. The vast majority of the clan members would choose either the Flame Congealing method or the Blazing Prairie Fire Method with the Blazing Prairie Fire Method being the most outstanding of the three and the three strongest members of the school Yao Tong, Li Xin Xin and Zhuo Hong Le using it as their cultivation method.

Both the Flame Congealing method and the Blazing Prairie Fire method were able to easily produce a strong flame for refining unlike the TriFlower Flame Concentrating method where every step of cultivation was arduous, there were even cases of people being stuck for years without any improvements. There was once an elder who recommended

that the TriFlower Flame Concentrating method be removed from the three great cultivation methods of the clan though the suggestion was rejected in the end. A long time ago, for reasons unknown, an illustrious elder of great might wrote in the clan records that the TriFlower Flame Concentrating method was to be one of the clan's public methods and that this would never be changed.

However, though cultivation with this method was arduous, it was not without its benefits. With both the Flame Congealing and the Blazing Prairie Fire methods, large amount of cultivation resources were required for every level for cultivation while the TriFlower Flame Concentrating method on the other hand did not. Naturally, it would be best if there were cultivation resources available for use, however even if there weren't, it would not matter.

There were however, legends of the TriFlower Flame Concentrating method's power surpassing that of the Flame Congealing and Blazing Prairie Fire method once it was cultivated to the later stages though this was only a legend and no one was going to believe an unsubstantiated legend like this. Furthermore, since they were only yellow grade cultivation methods for foundation building, as long as the foundation was stable enough, the cultivation method would not matter at all and choosing the TriFlower Flame Concentrating would only cause a person's time spent on building his foundation to be several times greater than that of his peers.

Cultivation was a battle against heaven, a struggle against the earth and a fight against time. As such, regardless of how strong the TriFlower Flame Concentrating method's later stages are, no one would ever choose this method.

Yao Chen chose the TriFlower Flame Concentrating method because he had no other choice. Though the Blazing Prairie Fire method was publicly

available, it required large amounts of cultivation resources to build his foundation and since his father had passed away, Yao Chen could only choose the TriFlower Flame Concentrating method which had a slow cultivation speed but did not require cultivation resources for building his foundation.

Luo Shu knew clearly that although Yao Chen worked tirelessly on his cultivation, because of his cultivation method, his flame controlling abilities were inferior to outstanding students like Yao Ji, Yao Ying and others, much less those of the three great experts of the school Yao Tong, Li Xin Xin and Zhuo Hong Le.

Little fatty Luo could not help but think of matters two years past.....

Were it not for Yao Chen dismantling his body and burning away his potential, all the so called experts of the school, Yao Xiu, Li Xin Xin and Zhuo Hong Le would all be inferior to Yao Chen.

Suddenly, sounds of laughter and mockery came from the side, it was the group who slandered Yao Chen the previous night.

"Yo, you've finally dared to showed yourself , we thought you wouldn't dare come, trash."

"Hah, well said. The word trash was specially tailored for him"

"That's right that's right, well said indeed. Last night we beat him up in front of his house yet he didn't even retaliate and in the end he was even rescued by his mother hahahaha....."

Luo Shu's face turned ugly and he was able to charge over when Yao Chen put his hand on his arm to restrain him.

"There's no need to bother ourselves with maggots, if we're bitten by them we just have to crush them with our feet, there's no need to bite them back."

"Hah, well said. Maggots!"

Luo Shu calmed down and glared back at them with what he thought was a fierce expression and turned around, not intending to bother himself with that bunch of scum any longer.

The selection that was taking place at the moment was also the school competition that took place quarterly and anyone who got into a fight with their schoolmates would be locked up, naturally their chances of participating would also be gone. Luo Shu held himself back, after all even if he did not think of himself he had to think of Yao Chen and though he did not think Yao Chen could win, it would be great if he was able to get a good result as the school's resources were allocated based on the person's ranking in the competition.

"Che, coward, trash, pussy."

Words that sounded worse came one after another yet they just fell on Yao Chen's deaf ears.

This time round, he had to place in the top eight of the competition to

qualify for the tournament.

There was only eight slots for the tournament ,however, based on the school's past rankings, Yao Chen was placed forty and below. In the school, if a person was not noticed his chances and opportunities for advancement would decrease because in the school,if a person wished to improve then just depending on his abilities alone would not be enough as the apportionment of pills, and special training would only be given to those who ranked highly or to those with a special background.

The age of the school's students will not exceed seventeen and of the three batches who could participate in the tournament, those who could refine tier 2 pills numbered close to a hundred while those that could refine tier 3 pills numbered less than ten.

The qualifications for the tournament this time round could be said to be a training as well. Though the places available were said to be prepared for the school competition, in reality, the room available for manipulation were large and as such, if Yao Chen wanted to get a place he would have to refine a grade 3 pill in order to stand a chance.

That's why Yao Chen had to give it all he had and try his very best!

Previously, Yao Chen's best result was the tier 2 AzureFlame pill which could temporarily increase the power of flame attribute skills.However the AzureFlame pill was considered a low ranked tier 2 pill and though there would be people fighting bitterly for it outside the clan, it could barely be considered acceptable for the school competition.

Yao Chen was not as nervous as Luo Shu and his eyes were filled with

anticipation. Soon enough, the elders of the school came out in a file with solemn faces, all of them wearing brand new robes and it was clear that they viewed the school competition with great importance.

The medicine tournament was a glorious event for the medicine clan and all events associated with the tournament be it a selection or a competition could all be considered as part of the tournament and no one in the clan, even if they were elders would take it lightly and slacken off.

"The competition is starting, all competitors to their respective places."

Everyone complied and began their preparations, while off to the side, attendants stood by the cauldrons ready to start the competition.

"The competition~~~~ starts now!!!"

Once the elder gave the signal to start, the students took their assigned places according to the school rankings and Yao Chen also found his designated spot. His working area had an ordinary refining cauldron as well as a standard set of materials.

In the competition, students were not allowed to use their personal cauldrons because it was the student's grasp of the foundations that were being tested and students that were unexceptional would have their refining success rate greatly reduced when using an unfamiliar cauldron. Ordinary students would not dare to attempt tier 2 high ranked pills that could be easily produced though naturally, the strong students would not care as they would be unaffected.

The ingredients that were provided for the competition were all ordinary materials that were commonly seen ,though they were enough to refine most pills under tier 4.The competition was more formal than it was in the past, but it was still essentially the same and Yao Chen was accustomed to the atmosphere and the method of testing, and after a few breaths had entered into a trancelike state where he focused his spiritual sense onto the ingredients by the side, carefully making his selection.

Onstage, numerous elders swept their gaze across the ten students in the front row; The ten of them were the top rankers in the previous school competition and were the cream of the crop when it came to skill in pill refining or the strength of their Dou Qi, and were all carefully nurtured by the elders in addition to having participated in numerous training missions in the clan, gaining much from their experiences.

“In this competition, any one of these ten would be able to win one of the eight spots.”

“Haha, there’s no need to guess who will be in the top 3, it is bound to be Yao Tong, Li Xin Xin and Zhuo Hong Le. Their abilities are exceptional and can even be compared to those of the main branch.”

“Indeed. However, the fourth to tenth places are hard to determine because the abilities of the rest of the students in the top ten do not differ by much, and it’s hard to say which two will be eliminated this time.”

The numerous elders kept sweeping their gazes across the ten, observing their movements while voicing their opinions.

BOOM

Suddenly, a large sound rang out and a stream of black smoke could be seen from the last row, indicating someone blew their cauldron up.

"Yao Xiao, disqualified"

Once the elders verified what had happened, they immediately made their decision and removed the student who had blown his cauldron up from the group so as to not affect the rest of the participants.

Everyone knew that in this competition, the qualifications for the tournament were at stake; The students in the back row were unconcerned with winning the qualifications for the tournament and had only participated to challenge their limits, they would make a name for themselves if they succeeded and would not suffer any great losses even if they failed. As such, they were also the first to fail, and they failed quite quickly....After the first failure, successive failures popped up one after another with everyone simply trying their luck at refining, as they were using cauldrons that they were unfamiliar with, it would be a miracle if they actually succeeded in refining.

With all the people behind him failing, it was inevitable that Luo Shu would be affected. With his average skill in refining, he lost control of the flame when his hand shook and a stream of black smoke could be seen rising from his cauldron. Although he did not blow his cauldron up, the materials in it were jumbled up and could no longer take shape, and the pill he was refining was a failure.

Luo Shu didn't mind his failure since he never was particularly concerned with pill refining and besides, he was unfamiliar with the cauldron he was using and was unable to control it well. He left the testing ground and went to the waiting area where he started looking for Yao Chen.

He wouldn't have known had he not taken a look, and at this moment Luo Shu was shocked by Yao Chen; What was he doing?!

Strange rings of black smoke could be seen emitting from Yao Chen's cauldron and it seemed like he was forcefully refining a spoilt failed batch of pills, trying to forcibly form it into a pill.

"It can't be....."

Luo Shu was in disbelief and was murmuring to himself.

Yao Chen was a few hundred times superior than him when it came to refining, no matter what happened there was no way he could have produced this type of black smoke!

"Haha, the trash failed in his refining yet still refuses to give up even when it's emitting such black smoke, is he trying to forcibly form the pill?"

"Even if the pill is formed, it would be a failure of a pill."

"He's trash, you think he knows the meaning of the words giving up?"

"Hahahaha"

The group of people from before gathered around Luo Shu, bombarding him with cynical words. It was obvious that their refining had failed long ago, which was only natural as people like them were the bottom feeders in the school. Those who were gifted wouldn't have time to speak ill of others when they barely had enough time for their own practice.

Luo Shu forcibly suppressed the anger in him and didn't throw a punch at them.

"Bah! You scum, if you've got balls, fight me one on one."

"One on one? You brat. Hahaha"

"The trash's friend is trash as well. In this day and age, who would go around asking people to fight them one on one?"

Luo Shu gritted his teeth and looked at Yao Chen, forcing himself to ignore these maggots.

However when he looked at Yao Chen again, he was stunned; Why did the black smoke disappear?

Logically speaking, once black smoke is emitted the ingredients being refined could not be salvaged and if they were forcefully formed into a pill, it would only result in a trash pill without any effects as the ingredients would be no different than burnt charcoal and it would only

be a pill in shape only.

However, at this moment white gas could be seen above Yao Chen's cauldron, streaming into the sky.

"Eh? That guy..."

"He's just faking it, nine out of ten he's burnt the failed pill away and is only pretending that everything's fine now. Hehe doesn't he realise that even if he can fake it for now, he can't fake it forever? Stupid."

"Haha there's always an idiot like this in every competition."

"What do you think a coward like him can actually refine?"

"He's not just a coward, he burnt his potential away and is only a nine starred Martial Practitioner, I really don't know what words can be used to describe him. How about trash?"

"He can't even produce charcoal, hahaha I'm afraid he's even lower than trash."

This stream of piercing mockery was obviously meant for Yao Chen and Luo Shu. The group of youths had no intention of bettering themselves and were only wasting their time in school, will bullying their schoolmates being the only form of enjoyment they had to kill their boredom. Naturally they don't just bully anyone, after all only the soft persimmons are pinched, and since it was well known that Yao Chen burnt his potential away they were all unafraid of him.

As for Luo Shu, he was trash that ranked nearly hundred and was also fat; He was a natural born target for bullying and was also naturally picked on by them.

Time slowly passed and after an hour a crisp sound was heard from the refining area, someone had finally finished their refining.

"It's Yao Tong."

The first person in the front row, a youth in black robes was currently taking the pills out from his cauldron with his Dou Qi surging and the air holes of the cauldron emitting white pill Qi , forming an auspicious cloud. The youth had starry eyes , a sword like brow and was tall and handsome, what was most outstanding about the wunderkind was that his goal was in sight yet he remained calm and unperturbed without a trace of arrogance.

It was only at this moment, that several elders shifted their gazes to the participants who have yet to finish with their brows furrowed.

Although the purpose of the school was to educate the youths without discrimination, what was taught was only the most basic fundamentals and in the end, the outstanding pupils would all study under a master of their choosing. However, it was only human nature to favour the strong while ignoring the weak and those who ranked below twentieth place were not favoured. It was tough for the weaker students to be treated equally unless they had a good family background and while the elders did not dislike the students outright, they were still giving them the equivalent of the silent treatment.

"They're not bad, it's just that i'm afraid they won't be able to make it within the time limit."

It was impossible to allow them to continue their refining without any time limits, and there was only an hour left while the participants who had yet to finish were still refining their pills.

Unless they could advance into a new level and explosively increase their power, it was impossible for them to finish in time, of course this was only a fool's dream.....

Chapter 6 – A Stunning Debut

Currently outside the refining area, the number two and three experts of the school Li Xin Xin and Zhuo Hong Le were discussing their successes and failures in their pill refining ; In the school competition, the two of them who occupy the second position interchangeably were both rivals and friends.

“What a pity, if my spiritual hadn’t been momentarily deceived by the flame intensity, the quality of my SilverWhite pill would be top grade.”

“You? Grade three top grade pill? Haha don’t joke around. I , on the other hand would have really refined a grade three top grade pill if i didn’t make a tiny mistake just now. Seriously though, that method for controlling the flame you mentioned back then is pretty good, it’s only that i have had some epiphanies of my own...”

The both of them were having their discussion with Zhuo Hong Le’s head slightly slanted to a side when he suddenly paused, a look of disbelief on his face.

“Eh? That guy.....something’s not right!”

“What’s wrong?”

Li Xin Xin turned around and froze, dumbfounded.

“What’s he doing?”

In the pill refining area, there was a person forming bizarre seals with his hands, drawing them with Dou Qi and overlaying them on top of each other in front of him. In the beginning, the overlaid layers of Dou Qi were unremarkable but soon they began to emit a frightful aura.

"The Great Overlaying Art?"

Amongst the elders there were a few who uttered a surprised 'Eh?'.

"No, it resembles the Great Overlaying art but the core of it is a different technique."

Elder Yao Lan's eyes twitched, the one who was currently using the Great Overlaying Art was none other than Yao Chen!

Two years ago when Yao Chen burnt his potential away Yao Lan sighed in pity, Yao Chen was a good seedling in his eyes and the burning of his potential was equivalent to crippling him. However at this moment, seeing Yao Chen creating seal after seal has reignited his interest in Yao Chen.

"This isn't the Great Overlaying Art, it's the Yuan Qi Explosion technique, an unique technique that was created by their branch of the clan. It's a shame that it's an extremely complicated technique to learn and there are almost no one who can truly master it."

Yao Lan recognized the technique as having originated from Yao Chen's grandfather, a legendary figure who had carved his name onto the ancestral stele. However in the hundreds of years since, Yao Chen's branch had steadily deteriorated due to various reasons as each successive

generation could not match up to their predecessors and the talented youths in each generation had all wasted away.

Yao Huo fell victim to the same fate, and Yao Chen....probably will too.

However, Yao Chen was pretty proficient in the Yuan Qi Explosion Technique, it seems that though his potential was incinerated, the natural intelligence that he was born with still intact. Yet the more outstanding he was the more people will sigh with pity, if only that incident had never happened, how perfect he would be!

Luo Shu was jumping in joy outside, finally he could retaliate.

"You scum, did you see that? It's called the Yuan Qi Explosion technique and it's a Xuan grade technique you scum will never be able to learn even in a hundred years!"

"Bah! What are you so proud for !"

The rascals face contorted as they retorted, however when they saw Yao Chen's performance they quieted down.

"What a pity, even if his Dou Qi is miraculous, unless he can produce a martial grandmaster's Dou Qi to speed up the refining process, he will never make it in time."

"Indeed, there's only a quarter hour left. Elder Yao Lan, should we begin preparing for the appraisal?"

Several elders of the school asked Yao Lan. Yao Lan had a high standing and position among the elders and naturally the announcements would be made by him. Of course, if anything went wrong, he would also be the one responsible.

Yao Lan stroked his white beard lightly while muttering to himself and nodded his head.

“Very well, however do not disturb those who have yet to finish refining just in case there really are some who are able to finish in time.”

The elders nodded their heads in assent and proceeded to enter the refining area.

Instantly, the entire area quietened down as everyone knew that the time to determine the final results had arrived.

As the elders entered, some of the students who hadn't finished were unable to take it and as their Dou Qi failed, their cauldrons exploded, or emitted black smoke and they failed as numerous different situations happened. However, the elders didn't even look at them as the elders walked to the front of the stage where all the students placed their refined pills into a bottle with their name written on it. The bottles were placed on the stage and were guarded by five fierce looking guards to prevent anyone from switching the pills out and cheating.

However, the actions and precautions taken were unnecessary as in the medicine clan even cripples would not have to worry about having food to eat and having a roof over their heads, even when it came to getting

married, though a beauty may not be possible, a virtuous spouse could be guaranteed. The medicine clan was one of the eight ancient clans and no matter how useless a clansman may be, in his veins flowed the blood of emperors and even if the current generation was trash, that did not mean that the next generation would also be trash as they may even produce a genius. Cheating however, was a capital offense in the medicine clan and was unpardonable, even members of the main branch were not spared and recidivists would be expelled from the clan.

A sentence that sums it up nicely would be that the medicine clansmen would dare to do anything except cheat.

Outside the refining area, Luo Shu's anxious face was covered in sweat; Crap crap crap, the elders have already entered and though they haven't announced the end of the competition, even a fool is able to tell that in the eyes of the elders, those who have yet to finish have already failed. However there is still a chance, if the refining is completed because the elders have finished appraising the pills on stage, it would still be counted as a success.

Yao Chen was still manipulating the flame unhurriedly and with all his attention focused on his cauldron he was unaware of what was going on around him.

In front of the stage, the elders have already decided to begin the appraisal, starting with Yao Tong's pills.

"Reporting to the elder, the name of this pill is Still Wind Lunar Invitation pill"

Yao Tong was exceedingly calm and steady as he stepped forward,paid his respects to the elders and stood to the side quietly.

The elders, Yao Lan included, nodded their heads in satisfaction. It was exceedingly rare for a student to have talent in addition to knowledge of etiquette and a branch family member like Yao Tong would have a great future ahead of him in the clan. A man like Yao Huo whose personality was overly carefree and does things his own way was disliked by the main families, otherwise with his talent and capabilities....

Yao Lan shook his head and focused his attention on the Still Wind Lunar Invitation pill that Yao Tong had refined,refusing to dwell on the matter anymore.After all, Yao Huo had passed on and dwelling on it was of no benefit to anyone.

Yao Lan opened the bottle and a fragrance spilled out, assaulting his nose and shaking his spirit.

"Oh? Not bad."

He poured one pill out of the bottle onto his hand, enveloping it in a layer of Dou Qi and sent his spiritual sense into the pill, ascertaining its composition, effects and grade.

Yao Lan withdrew his spiritual sense after half an incense had burnt out and put the pill back into the bottle, turning towards Yao Xiu.

"The formula for this pill does not exist in the clan, is it a new creation?"

"That's right, i acquired the incomplete formula while on a training mission outside half a year ago and only restored the formula recently."

"To actually dare use a new formula in the competition..Excellent. By using this Still Wind Lunar Invitation pill, a person can temporarily reduce the damage taken from wind attributed Dou Qi techniques and furthermore this pill can be taken by a Martial Practitioner, the side effects and toxicity are negligible and the pill is high grade... very good."

Yao Lan smiled, for his normally strict and taciturn self, using the words excellent and very good was very high praise.

Yao Tong stood by the side, calm and steady like a mountain with his face expressionless without a hint of joy to be seen.

"Thank you for your praise elder."

Yao Lan nodded his head once more and proceeded to the second pill.

This pill was refined by Li Xin Xin and he stepped forward, paying his respects to the elder and introduced the pill.

"Reporting to the elder, the name of this pill is the StoneSkin pill."

"Oh, the grade three StoneSkin pill. Interesting...."

Yao Lan nodded his head slightly and proceeded with his appraisal before rendering his judgement.

“Grade three StoneSkin pill. The formula for this pill comes from the clan’s treasury and once this pill is taken, for fifteen minutes the user’s body will gain the defensive prowess of stone and with display additional effects if paired with a earth attributed Dou Qi. The quality of the pill is high grade.”

The lean and skinny Zhuo Hong Le jumped up instantaneously and smiled.

“Elder, it’s my turn right? My pill is the ArmourBreaking pill, this time i’m definitely better than Li Xin Xin.”

“Stand to the side, if you keep your behaviour up i’ll start deducting points.”

Zhuo Hong Le stuck his tongue out and shut up.

While the pill appraisal was ongoing, Yao Chen had reached a critical point and was continuously using the Yuan Qi Explosion technique, overlaying his Dou Qi on top of each other. His Dou Qi had connected with his body, forming a sum greater than it’s parts and had brought him into the pseudo Martial Master level.

“Boom boom boom”

He kept blasting the flames into his cauldron.

Yet no matter what Yao Chen did, the elders did not pay any attention to him as they felt that even if Yao Chen were to display the strength of a martial master, it was too late and there was no way for him to finish his refining in the allotted time.

However, no one realised that Yao Chen's cauldron was emitting an unbelievable heat and the power of the flames had long since surpassed the Martial Master and had reached a level only attainable by a Martial Grandmaster!

Putting Dou techniques aside, Yao Chen's spiritual sensitivity had played a huge part in his refining as even though his Dou Qi was weak, his spiritual sensitivity and perception had already reached the Martial Grandmaster level....and maybe had already surpassed it!

"Boom boom boom"

At this moment, the materials were melding and combining together with increasing speed in the cauldron and with the guidance of his spiritual sense, the impurities and dregs were being filtered away and removed from the pill via his Dou Qi and discarded outside of the cauldron. The dregs and impurities that were removed were also overflowing with medicinal properties and Yao Chen, without wasting anything, used the Dou Qi agglomerated by his Yuan Qi explosion technique to compress them and then calcined them using the flames in his cauldron.

With a soft pi pa pi pa, the medicinal properties were extracted and sent into the pill that was being formed.

As time ticked by, in the refining area, only Yao Chen was still continuing and everyone else had given up. After all the competition had ended and even though they would be able to complete their pills if they carried on, they would only be laughed at if they continued to stay in the refining area. As such, under such circumstances, who would choose to carry on?

Yao Chen who was still carrying on instantly become the focus of everybody's attention.

"En? Still continuing?"

Yao Lan, who was appraising the pills, looked at Yao Chen with his heart moved. He took a closer look and smiled bitterly, he recognised the pill Yao Chen was refining as the grade 2 AzureFlame pill. He shook his head and turned away, a pill like that would not be worthy of being presented for appraisal and there was no need for him to pay any more attention to it.

There were still five people who had yet to be appraised and though they could not be compared to Yao Xiu, Li Xin Xin and Zhuo Hong Le, the pills they had refined were excellent grade two pills and could not be compared to the AzureFlame pill as their medicinal effects were more than ten times stronger.

One by one, the pills were appraised and a few of the elders nodded their heads in satisfaction. The current batch of students had numerous talents that though they could not be regarded as geniuses, were worthy of presenting themselves on stage. Though they might only be unremarkable in the medicine clan, they would be notable figures were they to venture outside. This was the strength of the Medicine Clan.

As the time neared its end, Yao Lan picked up the last of the pills and covered it with his Dou Qi, carefully examining it before giving his judgement a short while later.

"Lower tier growth pill, a person's Dou Qi would grow slightly after taking it. Grade two pill, normal quality."

The grades of a pill started from normal, followed by mid grade, upper grade, high grade and finally top grade. Top grade pills were something that people could only wish for and when a top grade pill was created, even the alchemist who created it would treat it as a precious treasure.

The last bottle of pills to be appraised was also the last to be created and as it was anxiously created while trying to meet the time limit, it could be considered good as it was finished on time though the same cannot be said of its quality.

Yao Lan put the bottle down and announced.

"The competition..."

Just as the end of the competition was to be announced, a large bang rang out and a thick cloud of white smoke was seen bellowing out from the pill refining area.

Yao Lan's voice came to a sudden halt and he looked towards Yao Chen, seeing only a floating white cloud with waves of Dou Qi emanating

from within it. From the fluctuations, the pills appear to be in the midst of being collected.

"Pill Qi forming a cloud, this"

"This can't be?"

"The pill... is about to be formed?"

"The time! Is the time up?"

An elder hurriedly looked at the hourglass and saw the last few bits of sand falling, there were only a few breaths of time left. Right at this very moment, there was a loud bang and the pill Qi could be seen rushing towards the heavens before returning back into the cauldron, and a lustrous gold coloured pill rushed out of the cauldron in a flash, entering the bottle held in Yao Chen's palm.

"The pill Qi returned into the cauldron, an indication of a top grade pill."

Yao Lan's gaze sank and his voice took on a peculiar tone. He had never expected Yao Chen to finish his refining in time, and that he would actually produce a pill with signs of it being top grade. Even if the pill was not a top grade one, Yao Chen's current performance and the incident two years ago caused an inexplicable feeling to rise in Yao Lan's heart.

A few elders were quiet as they observed Yao Chen collect his pill and walked towards them.

Yao Chen was exhausted but he forcefully raised his spirits up and prevented himself from collapsing.

"Reporting to the elders, this pill is called the VioletFlame pill."

Yao Lan took the bottle of pill.

"Attendants, help him to the side for a rest."

Luo Shu flew out from the sidelines, not forgetting to glare at the group of bullies. As he was helping Yao Chen to the side, his eyes kept blinking non stop, but he kept quiet as he was in the presence of the elders though his excitement could be seen in his shining eyes.

Yao Chen laughed as he looked at Yao Lan nervously.

Yao Lan opened the bottle and faint white Qi visible to the naked eye flowed out, transforming into wisps of wind ,spreading the medicinal scent of the pills everywhere.

"Excellent pill!"

Several elders could not help but utter words of praise.

After a moment,when Yao Lan had finished his appraisal and put the pill back into the bottle, his gaze drifted unsteadily and waited for a long while before he opened his mouth.

"Excellent,outstanding! This VioletFlame pill originates from the AzureFlame pill and as for the effects...Tell us about it Yao Chen."

This sentence of Yao Lan's caused an uproar, with Yao Lan's character it was inconceivable to think that he actually a judgement of outstanding.Even Yao Xiu only got a praises of good and very good, for Yao Lan to utter the words outstanding it was highly likely that the pill refined by Yao Chen would surpass that of Yao Xiu.

Could this be possible?

Everyone's gazes fell on Yao Chen.

Yao Chen replied.

"Yes elder. This pill is the same as the AzureFlame pill and can increase the potency of flame attributed techniques with the difference being that the AzureFlame pill only raises it by ten percent while the VioletFlame pill raises it by fifty percent or more."

Fifty percent ! And more!

The audience had looks of incredulity on their faces.

"Increasing the potency of flame attributed techniques by fifty percent or more, isn't that an effect that only tier four pills possess?"

Pills like this could explosively increase a person's battle prowess and was different from body strengthening pills or recovery pills, as an increase of ten or twenty percent would be able to determine the victor in a life or death struggle, let alone fifty percent.

"Are there any side effects?"

Someone asked. It was inconceivable that someone's whose name he did not even know had refined a pill that was unimaginable to him, a pill that raises the potency of Dou Qi techniques by fifty percent!

Yao Lan waves his hand.

"This pill is the first of its kind, and can be considered a tier three pill and as for anything else, further examination is required before a conclusion can be made."

Yao Lan's announced in a deep voice.

The crowd went into an uproar, elder Yao Lan was actually unable to reach a conclusion about the pill immediately.

What was this?!

Yao Chen shocked everyone present!

"Alright, the competition has ended. The results will be posted on the school bulletin board in the evening."

Yao Lan finished his words and looked at Yao Chen deeply before turning around and leaving with the elders.

As the elders left, the students surged towards Yao Chen, their gazes filled with admiration and envy. He had actually created a pill which even elder Yao Lan was unable to ascertain and grade conclusively, regardless of what the final result would be, Yao Chen's name would resound throughout the clan.

Chapter 7 – Qualifying for the tournament

Evening.

Several hundred clansmen were gathered outside the school under the blood red glow of the setting sun with members of the various branches of the clan present in addition to the families of the participants. The school competition serves not just as a means for qualifying for the medicine tournament, but also as an excellent opportunity to scout for talents.

Even if students were unable to qualify for the tournament, opportunities would await them if they performed well during the competition. The clan has numerous businesses in the outside world which required plenty of talented personnel and there was a good future awaiting those who joined. Furthermore, though the speed of cultivation in the outside world is inferior to that of the clan, the clansmen in the outside world were all highly respected and the respected accorded to them could be considered a different sort of honour compared to that of the tournament.

Currently, everyone was looking at the ranking results.

The top thirty were all people that everyone wanted to befriend and recruit while the top eight qualified for the tournament.

Yao Chen and Luo Shu arrived at the school and while the crowd gathered in front of the school gates could not be described as forming mountains and seas, it was still bustling with activity and the road was so crowded that not even a water droplet could squeeze through and

several branch family headhunters had already begun recruiting.

"This is quite the crowd..."

Before Luo Shu's voice had even faded the crowd had already parted for them, clearing out a small path for them.

Luo Shu's eyes twitched and his legs were a little wobbly as he twisted his neck and looked at Yao Chen seemingly wishing to ask him what's going on.

The release of the results were but a formality as in reality, anyone with a certain amount of authority and influence was able to know the results before the official release of the results.

Eyeing the situation before them, it was obvious that the news of the top eight had already been leaked and Yao Chen had to be included in the top eight.... First place notwithstanding, it was likely that he was in the top three, how else would he elicit such a reaction from the crowd and have them clear a way for him?

Yao Chen took a deep breath. Though he had expected something like this to happen when he refined the VioletFlame pill that was by all indications a top grade pill, which would give him an eighty percent chance of getting into the top eight and qualifying for the tournament when the results actually coincided with his expectations, his heart was pounding and he was understandably nervous.

However, the actual ranking he got was unimportant to Yao Chen as he

only wished to qualify for the tournament. To put it bluntly, he was only a nine starred Martial Practitioner and though he could explosively unleash the Dou Qi of a martial master with the assistance of his techniques, this had a major flaw because even though it could be considered a trump card, when in combat against an enemy, it was not as effective. In the medicine clan, the little increase in power from his technique was insignificant and could not be considered an advantage as there existed numerous refining techniques that far surpassed explosive techniques like his.

However, it wasn't as if Yao Chen had no plans for what is to happen next, after all there is an entire month till the tournament starts.

Though time was tight, so long as he was determined, it was enough to force out his power that had been hidden by the medical baths all these years.

Creak...

Finally the school gates open and the elders filed out, with the first elder, Yao Lan, leading the way holding a ruler and a scroll in his hands.

This was the second ceremony for releasing the results of the competition, though only the competition that occurs in conjunction with the medicine tournament every five years had such pomp and ceremony to it. The top eight would have their names recorded into the school's history and though it could not be compared to having their names recorded on the ancestral stele, it was still a great honour.

Yao Lan's gaze swept across the crowd gathered in front of him

consisting of not just students, but their families and people from the various branch families as well. These people would form the core of the medicine clan's strength in the future! The young crowd, heirs to the clan's future, were lively and bustling with excitement, proof of the clan's prosperity.

"Numerous talents emerged in this competition. Fifty two contestants finished refining, comparable with the previous competition, with seventeen people have consolidated their powers."

Though the words spoken were according to a predetermined standard format and template, the current atmosphere gave them a sense of solemnity and as he finished speaking, the twinkling stars rose into the night sky.

"The auspicious hour has arrived. Release the results."

As firecrackers were set off, Yao Lan released the scroll he held in his hand, letting it float in the air.

"30th place, Yao He"

"29th place, Yao Kou"

The rankings were announced in descending order.

Every second name that was announced drew acclaims and shouts of 'Bravo' from the crowd. There were over three hundred people who took part in the competition and those who made it into the top thirty were

accorded great honour and prestige. However, the crowd was still restraining themselves, the true elites were those in the top eight that qualified for the tournament.

"9th place, Yao Yun..."

Loud exclams were heard from the crowd.

In front of the gates, a tall boy's face was ashen with his eyes filled with disbelief. Yao Chen looked at him; Yao Yun was a well known and highly esteemed figure in the school and was the best in terms of skills regarding pill refining apart from the top three elites of the school, Yao Xiu, Li Xin Xin and Zhuo Hong Le, if one disregards the strength of one's Dou Qi. Yet this time, Yao Yun was only ranked ninth and did not even break into the top eight.

"Ahh~~ Like I said, what comes around, goes around. A person like him who only relies on playing politics and his relationships is bound to suffer misfortune at critical moments"

Zhuo Hong Le, who was usually ranked second or third burst out in mocking laughter without giving any face to Yao Yun, eliciting sniggers from the surrounding crowd. In the past, Yao Yun was too arrogant, disregarding his peers and had unknowingly offended countless people.

Yao Yun's arrogance was due to the fact that he was the underling of the main family's genius Yao Feng, and whenever Yao Feng required something done Yao Yun would almost always be the one to do so.

"8th place, Yao Dong..."

Yao Lan's stern voice continued to announce the results.

When the 8th place was announced, the crowd heated up with a bang and Yao Dong, who was in 8th place, was immediately surrounded by well wishers and headhunters, in addition to people who wished to marry their daughters to him and had already taken out a long list of the dowry.

The top eight would qualify for the medicine tournament, which was a great honour and participants would make their names known throughout the clan, proving their talents and abilities and the various branch families would be trying to get into their good graces, trying their hardest to recruit them. Though everyone was from the same clan, the size of the ancient medicine clan was enormous beyond the imagination of the common man and there were countless branches of the clans with their own businesses and industry, even the main branch had over ten families that owned their respective properties and industries.

"7th place....6th place....."

The atmosphere grew increasingly heated with every name that Yao Lan announced, and the people whose names were announced were all abnormally flushed. In the clan, qualifying for the tournament is akin to getting two types of recognition, the recognition of their talent and intelligence. As for their qualifications and merits, though the medicine clan is enormous, it had a large territory too and no matter how much resources it had, there were also times when there were insufficient resources to go around, as such, if a person desired more resources but did not have sufficient talent, he could only exchange his merits and contributions for the resources desired. However, given that the majority

of the people were only a Martial Practitioner, even if they were Martial Masters, how much merit and contribution to the clan would they be able to earn and how much merit was available for them to earn?

That's why qualifying for the tournament was equivalent to carving out a highway to the future, and this is why the students for fighting so fiercely to qualify.

"4th place..."

Elder Yao Lan's voice paused and his gaze shifted to Li Xin Xin.

Li Xin Xin's face changed, and his adam's apple twitched as he took a breath.

"Li Xin Xin"

As expected, Yao Lan announced his name.

The surrounding crowd was stunned did not react boisterously as initially expected.

Ever since the school started, amongst the hundreds of students, Li Xin Xin's name had always been in the top three and yet he actually placed fourth in this competition of the utmost importance.

Li Xin Xin's gaze fell on Yao Chen.

"Looks like the rumours are true, Yao Chen's entered the top three."

"I thought the rumour was false.."

"It can't be, i know about this kid Yao Chen, how can it be him when his Dou Qi has yet to reach the Martial Master realm?"

"I heard that he has a technique to explosively increase his strength, though i'm unclear about the specifics."

"Impossible! How can there be such a technique? Using an explosive technique like that has an eighty to ninety chance of the pill being toxic with a high chance of the pill being useless. The reason why elder Yao Lan did not announce the quality of his pill back then should be due to this exact reason the fact that his name has yet to be called should be because he has been eliminated."

"Come to think about it, in the school rankings, he blew up his cauldron quite a few times?"

Some people were envious while others were jealous as they were unconvinced even when word of the results got around as they spouted sarcastic remarks and dug up matters from Yao Chen's past, such as him incinerating his potential.

"3th place.."

Yao Lan's voice became the center of everyone's attention and in an instant, everyone became silent.

“Zhuo Hong Le”

Exclaims broke out amongst the crowd once more.

Is third place was Zhuo Hong Le, who would second place be? Yao Chen? Afterall, the first place has always been Yao Tong and his position was unassailable. However...it would be inconceivable for Yao Chen to be second!

“If Yao Chen were to be second....Ahh~~ This would be the greatest joke under heaven, an unbearably amusing joke.”

He unleashed his prowess only at the critical moment.

“Ahh~ You saying that just proves that you don’t know his life was like with only his mother and him and the fierce struggles they had. Take the Root Solidifying Musk pill for example, only 1 is distributed every quarter and without a man supporting the household, they are barely able to get by with just having millet every month. He would never get any special support from the clan if he does not show his hidden strength and talent.”

The hidden strength and talent was actually destroying his future, and there was nothing more stupid than doing it.

“Huu...Shut up, they’re about to announce the second place.”

Yao Lan’s voice paused slightly and he waved the ruler in his hands, causing the voices of the crowd to die down and coughed lightly before

continuing with the announcement once he had pindrop silence.

"In second place..."

He paused again and his gaze fell to Yao Chen. The crowd felt his gaze fall on Yao Chen and their faces collectively changed. Was this unremarkable kid about to shock the world?

"Yao Tong!"

Yao Lan announced the name loudly.

There was total silence..

Yao Tong, who had remained calm and collected thus far, heard his name called out and in the same instant, his facial expression contorted and changed greatly. Second place!!!

Ever since he had started school, Yao Tong was like a crane amidst chickens, standing out from the crowd. The position of first had always belonged to him and the oft mentioned three elites of the school were simply something that people had created themselves and was something he had always laughed at. He had never regarded Li Xin Xin and Zhuo Hong Le as his peers and the few private challenges he had with them were laughable to him, as he was totally out of their league.

It was unexpected that in this competition of the utmost importance, the high and mighty Yao Tong would only place second, who then, was first place?

Yao Tong's eyes narrowed for a moment and his face returned to its usual impassive expression, his line of sight focused on Yao Chen.

Could it really be him?

The only possibility was that the VioletFlame pill was appraised as a top grade pill because apart from that, there was no way anyone else would be able to compete with his Still Wind Lunar Invitation pill. Even so, Yao Tong still had confidence in himself, so what if it was really a top grade pill? Yao Chen had no way of competing with him, putting aside the fact that he was someone who was top ranked in the school, the fact that his Still Wind Lunar Invitation pill originated from an ancient formula held great meaning to it, by restoring an ancient formula before the competition, the points that would be granted to him would be greater than that of a mere top grade pill.

The surrounding crowd understood his reasoning as well. In the competition, Yao Tong's Still Wind Lunar Invitation pill was heads and shoulders above the rest and was the best, with the other pills unable to hold a candle to it. Yao Chen's VioletFlame pill on the other hand, to put it nicely, only had the indications of being a top grade pill and was not necessarily a top grade pill, furthermore what about its toxicity and side effects? A student who ranked outside the top forty year round without any improvements lacked the ability to convince the crowd.

However, who else could possibly be first place if not Yao Chen? Apart from the unexpected Yao Chen, there was no one else who could possibly compete with the Still Wind Lunar Invitation pill.

Yao Chen's heartbeat sped up as he knew the effects of the VioletFlame pill best, and even if it were a top grade pill it could not be compared to the Still Wind Lunar Invitation pill and furthermore, the VioletFlame pill had numerous flaws.... Of course he had confidence because in Yao Chen's mind, he would be able to get into the top eight, but currently the results for second place had already been announced but his name had yet to appear!

Did he fail?

Or was he.....first place?

First place....was it possible?

As Yao Chen was worrying about his placing in the competition, elder Yao Lan gently waved the ruler in his hand solemnly.

"1st place..."

The crowd was deathly silent and a few clansmen even held their breaths , this was the first time in recent memory that the champion of the school competition was not Yao Tong!

Could the champion be the ascending Yao Chen?

The gazes of the various recruiters fell on Yao Chen, if the champion was really him...in an instant, eyes flashed as the recruiters traded their gazes amongst each other as if they were clashing with weapons ; With Yao Chen's poverty stricken family and his lack of a power supporter, he

was an ideal candidate for recruitment.

"Yao Chen!!"

Elder Yao Lan's voice rang out like a sonorous bell.

As his voice faded, the crowd erupted into a cacophony of voices.

"It's really him?"

"This, this is ridiculous!"

"Yao Tong doesn't look too good."

"Haha, Yao Tong will definitely make his move after this competition ends."

"I'm afraid the person who's even more furious is Yao Yun."

Yao Yun placed ninth in this competition, though were the competition the same as it was in the past, with his abilities he would definitely be amongst the top eight and it could be said that because of Yao Chen's sudden ascent, he was not fated to enter the medicine tournament and had lost the qualification for the tournament that was originally his...

Though a grudge like this was not equivalent to that of a life and death grudge, it was certainly not something that could be easily resolved as

the tournament was too important to the youths of the clan. However, the path of cultivation is one of constant struggle, the person who does not fight against heaven, against other people and against himself is destined to lead a life of mediocrity without ever making a name for himself.

As for Yao Chen, he was in a trance and was oblivious to the discussions and murmurs around him. Champion ...he was the champion!

Though he said he was uninterested in fame and glory and only wished to enter the top eight and qualify for the tournament, when he was crowned the champion, his chest was filled with an inexplicable feeling that was both foreign and wonderful. However, there was always someone who would ruin a wonderful moment like this as Luo Shu, who was even more excited than Yao Chen, grabbed his shoulders and shook it non stop while wildly exclaiming

"Brother Chen... Champion, you're the champion!!"

"Brother Shu."

Yao Chen shook his head helplessly

"What is it brother Chen?"

"Could you let go? I'm still feeling weak."

Although he had already rested for a few hours, the toll on him from using the Yuan Qi Explosion technique and the hand seals he used had left him in a weakened condition.

"Haha.... i forgot"

Luo Shu scratched the back of his head while laughing stupidly, he was simply too happy.

Yao Lan coughed gently and used channeled his energy, his voice booming across the crowd

"Yao Chen, Yao Tong, Zhuo Hong Le..... the eight people mentioned above have qualified for the tournament. I hope that you will continue to work hard and improve yourselves even more after the tournament...."

Not a single word of encouragement was registered by Yao Chen whose mind was only filled with the fact that he was the champion of the competition and that he had qualified for the tournament.

There was still a month before the tournament and the wall that Yao Chen had to climb next was advancing to a Martial Master within the month. If he was not a Martial Master, then regardless of how talented he was in refining, he would only serve as an accompaniment to the ones competing.

Suddenly, a voice rang out

"Elder, though the VioletFlame pill is not bad, it is still inferior to the Still Wind Lunar Invitation pill and yet Yao Chen is ranked above Yao Tong. Why is that so? We find it hard to accept the results if the reason is not made known to us"

Chapter 8 – Closed Cultivation

The person who shouted out was Yao Yun, who was in the ninth place, whose facial expression was frosty as he shot dagger like glares at Yao Chen.

Directly questioning the elder like he did was extremely disrespectful, but being ranked ninth was an extremely painful to be in, as he was so close to qualifying for the tournament and anyone else in his position would be furious too. Furthermore, Yao Yun was a petty person and had already treated Yao Chen as his hateful enemy.

Though it was disrespectful, Yao Lan's expression remained the same as he placidly replied.

"The results for the competition this time round was determined by the elder Yao Wan Huo, anyone who does not accept the results may take their complaints to him."

Elder Yao Wan Huo. In an instant, everyone was suppressed.

Yao Wan Huo was the grand elder of the clan and was held in incomparably high esteem as he was well known to be fair and impartial, and no one said anything more since the grand elder had spoken.

Yao Yun as obviously displeased but he gritted his teeth and endured, questioning the school elders was a small matter but if his words should implicate the grand elder, he would be guilty of the offense of disrespecting the grand elder.

The crowd slowly dispersed and Yao Chen declined the various invitations offered him as there was nothing more important to him than getting home.

The walk home was quiet and the normally talkative Luo Shu was unexpectedly silent, the surging excitement in his heart growing with every step.

Under a tree by the entrance of the alleyway was a beautiful and elegant figure that looked towards them

"Mother."

Yao Chen's eyes shined and for reasons unknown, his nose started to run and his eyes became moist. Originally he thought that the only value in being crowned the champion in the school competition was the qualifications for joining the tournament and that everything else was meaningless but now, upon seeing the earnest look on his mother's face he felt that there were many things that he wanted to tell his mother.

Yao Chen ran to his mother and opened his mouth to speak, but suddenly forgot what he had originally wanted to say.

"I'm back."

"Let's go home"

Yao Qing smiled faintly, the gentle look in her eyes seemingly able to encompass everything in the world.

"Aunt Qing, Brother Chen is the champion, Qunt Qing you shoulda seen the look on their faces , haha, it was awesome. Aunt Qing....what's for dinner tonight?"

Finally, Luo Shu couldn't take it any more and exploded.

"Brother Chen is no less than the champion, the C.H.A.M.P.I.O.N, how can you be so placid? At the very least, you have to increase the number of dishes right?"

As the walked along the alley, returning home, the courtyard in front of their houses was already brightly decorated and Luo Shu's family was still bustling with activity at the gates , stopping only when they saw them as they walked towards Yao Chen.

"Excellent work Yao Chen. Champion of the competition, back then..... haha anyways, you did not shame your father."

Yao Bing slapped his shoulders forcefully, his eyes shining as he probably recalled his past with Yao Chen's father ,however, when his gaze fell onto Luo Shu his smile turned bitter. Back then, Yao Huo and Luo Bing were such glorious figures in the school, Luo Shu oh Luo Shu, could you try to not be an embarrassment?

Luo Shu's neck shrank as he understood the meaning behind his father's gaze, he wasn't like his father and his father wasn't like him and if

he did not quickly change the subject, he was going to be taught a lesson again so he quickly changed the subject.

"Aunt Qing, aren't we going to have a big feast to celebrate Yao Chen becoming the champion?"

Luo Bing shook his head. This son of his was hopeless but luckily he had a good son in his eldest child Luo Shan.

"Alright, you're pretty good at such petty tricks, if only you could apply it to your cultivation...."

While it was claimed to be a feast, in actuality it was more of a family meal with additional dishes accompanied by wine as the two families sat together, laughing and joking with plenty of encouraging words for Yao Chen.

More than half of what was spoken was trivial and inconsequential though Yao Chen did not mind and remembered them all, though no matter how much was said, the events two years past was never mentioned.

Though his ban on alcohol was supposedly lifted, Yao Chen only drank three cups and never touched a single drop more.

There was still a month before the tournament, and while the time left was neither long nor short, time flows like water and if Yao Chen wanted a good showing at the tournament, he could not let himself relax even for a moment.

With the wine drunk and the food eaten and everyone's stomachs filled, Luo Bing took his leave with his two sons following in tow. Yao Qing cleaned the table in the blink of an eye and turned her head, looking gently at Yao Chen.

"Chen-er, being the champion is good but.....remember what your father said. The arrow hits the first bird, remember not to get complacent."

"Chen-er understands mother, i'll go practice now."

"En, wait."

Yao Qing nodded her head but stopped Yao Chen from going to the underground training chambers.

"The current medicinal formula is unable to let you advance to a Martial Master in just the one month that we have, and if you aren't a Martial Master, regardless of how exquisite your refining techniques are, it would be hard to use them in the tournament."

"Mother?"

Yao Chen blinked his eyes. Though time was short, if he gritted his teeth and gave it all he had, there was still a chance that he would be able to advance to a Martial Master in a month.

"From today onwards, add an additional portion of the medical bath formula."

Yao Qing bit her lips and said viciously.

With an additional portion of the medical formula, the agony when taking the bath would double.

Yao Chen smiled, he would have added an additional portion even if his mother had not told him to.

The bath was as always, already ready and heated when they arrived in the training chamber after activating the entrance mechanism. The liquid in the bath was not the same as before and had been replaced with another type of medicinal liquid. Yao Chen took out some ingredients and measured them carefully before throwing them into the bath, causing roiling waves to form, streams of violet smoke to rise up and a pungent smell of medicine to quickly fill the room.

Yao Chen had only a whiff of the smell before his body instinctively reacted and his body involuntarily shook.

The type of medicinal liquid used was different from the marrow cleansing and bone washing liquid used previously. The previous liquid only caused an intense itchiness while this liquid causes intense agony that will elicit an intense reaction from the body even if he had already bathed in it all year and had already grown accustomed to it psychologically.

Yao Chen took a deep breath, removed his clothes and took out a pale azure pill, placing it in his mouth causing an intense bitterness to overwhelm his senses. It was a bitterness that would be able to revive the dead, however, Yao Chen was used to it and he bit the pill and slowly chewed it. Although the pill could simply be swallowed, the effects of the pill was best absorbed by taking it slowly.

Refining this pill requires large quantities of various medicinal ingredients and was a huge toll on Yao Chen's family, and because most of the materials was hand picked by his mother, even if it was hellishly bitter, he would still think it was sweet.

It was only after several minutes when the pill had dissolved in his mouth before Yao Chen stepped into the bath.

Whoosh..boom..

A faint roar could be heard as the liquid in the bath seemingly came to life, forming waves that resembled insects as they rushed into Yao Chen's body as if they were drawn by the medicine that Yao Chen had just ingested.

"Ahhhh...."

Even if he had already experienced this at least a hundred times, Yao Chen was unable to bear it, even more so now that he had added an additional portion of medicine and he screamed out involuntarily even as he tried to endure.

Agony. This was an agony worse than having ten thousand arrows piercing through your heart.

However, the agony was not the worst part of the ordeal, what was even tougher was that Yao Chen had to maintain a state of calm clarity while separating the medicinal energy entering his body and imbue it with his Dou Qi before circulating it throughout his body, five viscera, four limbs, brain, Dantian.....and this was not the end as he still had to use his Dou Qi in conjunction with the medicine to strengthen his body.

After an unknown amount of time, suddenly spirit fire ignited in front of Yao Chen with a bang as Yao Chen got used to the pain and was no longer screaming pitifully. At this moment, his Dou Qi infused it self into the flame and the medical essence was slowly catalyzed into a strange entity that resembled Dou Qi but was not Dou Qi that entered Yao Chen's body but unexpectedly did not enter his Dantian but his muscles, excluding his bones instead, and became silent as if it went into hibernation.

Yao Chen tried to control the enormous power than entered his body but no matter what he did, the power seemed to have disappear like mud in an ocean, without a trace of it to be seen. Contrary to his expectations however, it brought upon Yao Chen an even fiercer surge of agony and his eyes dimmed and he almost lost his consciousness amidst the pain. Yao Chen hurriedly gave up trying to control the power and focused his consciousness and continued absorbing the medicine essence ; Once he loses his consciousness, the medicine bath would go to waste, and given how destitute Yao Chen's family is, any form of waste of unacceptable.

The colour of the medical liquid slowly grew fainter till it was no different from clear water before Yao Chen allowed himself to relax as the pain subsided. It was only now that the turbid sweat poured forth from his

pores and in an instant,Yao Chen felt dehydrated and weakened.

Yao Chen picked up one of the five altar sized canteens of water to the side, tilted his head and gulped down all the water till not even a drop was left.However, the water that had just entered his body was expelled from his body as turbid sweat.He took up another canteen and gulped the water down but it was once again transformed into turbid sweat and was expelled from his body as perspiration.Yao Chen continued with the third,fourth canteen..... it was only till he had reached the last canteen that he stopped sweating.

However, producing such a large amount of perspiration was a strain on his body and a wave of weakness overcame Yao Chen and his eyes saw nothing but darkness as he hurriedly clambered out of the bath and wearing his clothes before feeling his way along the wall to the stone bed in the closed cultivation chamber where he used the TriFlower Flame Concentrating technique as his Dou Qi carefully inched along his meridians and he vaguely felt the barrier separating the nine starred Martial Practitioner realm from the Martial Master realm.

Crossing this thin line was all it took to advance to the martial master realm though it was easier said than done.It was not just the normal restrictions from the Martial Practitioner realm that was holding him back, two years ago Yao Chen's mother sealed away the Dou Qi in him, making it even more difficult for him to break through.At this moment, the Dou Qi circulating in Yao Chen's body formed a cyclone, however, the cyclone was weak and unstable, flickering in and out of existence as if it was incorporeal, and was unable to take shape.

Yao Chen stubbornly held on with his willpower for an unknown period of time before he was no longer able to hang on and felt his mind slow down as he lost consciousness.However, even when he was unconscious

Yao Chen's body instinctively continued to use the TriFlower Flame Concentrating technique, circulating it throughout his body, combing every inch of it and cleansing his body. Throughout this process, subtle changes were happening to the TriFlower Flame Concentrating technique, it increased not in power but in terms of control as the flame attribute Dou Qi of the TriFlower Concentrating technique merged together with Yao Chen's spiritual sensitivity, and it was as if it became an extension of his arm.

Just like that, the night passed quietly.

The early morning air entered the closed cultivation chamber via the vents, carrying the faint scent of the morning dew as Yao Chen eyes twitched faintly as he stirred from his slumber. As he opened his eyes, he was ravenously hungry as his stomach grumbled and though his body still felt weak, he was full of energy.

Yao Chen got out of bed, filled a bucket with spring water drawn from the side of the room, took a shower and changed his clothes before leaving the room.

As he reached the courtyard, his mom had already went out though she had left the table filled with a spread of food. Yao Chen ran to the table and wolfed everything down, noticing the note on the table only when he had cleaned the plates.

Yao Chen knew without even looking at it that his mother had gone to the mountains behind the clan to pick herbs. Yao Chen's daily cultivation necessities required far more than what the clan gave them and the amount given had decreased in the past two years, half of the items needed for Yao Chen's medicinal bath was personally picked by his

mother and this was why he was willing and able to endure the agony of the bath no matter how painful it was.

Yao Chen's mother would not return for several days whenever she went out to pick herbs and Yao Chen's heart wavered as he was naturally worried about her though he quickly steadied himself. A man should not be indecisive, and since he knew his mother was enduring such hardships on his behalf, he had to focus on his cultivation in order to repay her.

As he was pondering how he should practice his cultivation for the next few days, he heard the little fatty's voice outside.

"Brother Chen , Aunt Qing, i'm here."

Luo Shu's face turned green, the situation was not good as his lips trembled

"Broth....Brother Chen, Aunt Qing has gone out again..?"

Yao Chen smiled as he nodded.

"I'm afraid that i'll be going into closed cultivation for this period of time."

Luo Shu's face turned green as he nodded his head in a daze.

"I understand....I'll go back and eat Mantous..?"

"Haha... My mother left this braised pork for you, if you aren't greedy, it should be enough for you."

"Aunt Qing is the best. Heh, go for your close cultivation Brother Chen, i'm returning home."

Luo Shu snatched the pork and rushed out happily, if he was late, there wouldn't even be mantous left in his house.

Yao Chen shook his head and collected himself as he made his preparations, sealed up the house gates and returned to the cultivation chamber. He did not have a second to waste as he had to breakthrough to a Martial Master within a month but also had to solidify his cultivation as well. To an alchemist, there could not be any mistakes whatsoever when refining a pill because apart from spiritual perception, the ability to maintain a certain level of Dou Qi for extended periods of time was required in pill refining.

Though the medicine bath was a shortcut, it was also a double edged sword. Currently, without the medicine bath, the TriFlower Concentrating technique's progress was frustratingly slow and though his Dou Qi was circulating, it was only a solid foundation and had no indications of breaking through to the next realm.

After ten revolutions, Yao Chen took a deep breath and smiled bitterly. A solid foundation maybe a good thing, but it also increased the difficulty of breaking through to the next realm because the process of breaking through was a destructive one where the old Dou Qi method was destroyed and a new one was formed. As such, the more solid a person's foundation is, the greater the energy expenditure required to break it though the benefits gained would also increase proportionally. It was an

exchange of sorts where the increase in power gained had to be exchanged with an increase in the amount of hard work needed.

The difficulty was expected and Yao Chen was not in a hurry. After having had the medicinal bath for the past two years, a terrifying power lay dormant in his body and truthfully, not even Yao Chen knew how strong the power was as he only had a vague feeling that if he wished to break the barrier and step into the Martial Master realm, all he had to do was draw this enormous power out and he would be able to break his old Dou Qi method and the seal that was laid two years ago, and form the Dou Qi cyclone of a Martial Master.

This was not the first time he had attempted this, and while none of his previous attempts had succeeded, this time, he would definitely be able to succeed in one month. He ate soldier pills when he was hungry, drank spring water when he was thirsty, and had other pills to replenish his body and Yao Chen also had cleansing pills to solve the matter of his excrement and spent half a month in the cultivation chamber without a hint of frustration. The most essential quality of an exceptional alchemist was actually not spiritual sensitivity but patience because an alchemist who could not endure loneliness and dullness would have limited achievements regardless of how terrifying his talent may be.

In this half month, Yao Chen's mother only came once to formulate the powder for the medicine bath before leaving without uttering even a single word to Yao Chen who was currently in closed cultivation.

Chapter 9 – Start of the tournament

As Yao Chen was undergoing closed cultivation, the entire Medicine Clan was finishing the final preparations for the tournament.

The tournament is a grand event where invitations would be extended to other great powers, and the outstanding scions of the clan would be presented to the world.

Currently, the powers were subordinate to the Medicine Clan, as well as those that were on good terms with the clan had all arrived early.

The tournament was not only a grand event for the clan, it was also an excellent opportunity for the other powers to acquire precious and rare pills.

Usually, the pills available externally were limited in supply and it was only during the tournament that the restrictions on the supply were lifted and pills were made freely available.

Though there was still half a month to go before the start of the tournament, transactions were already starting to take place and the various powers, with numerous rare and precious materials in hand, had set up shop along the streets and neighbourhoods by using various methods and had their banners and flags on display listing the pills that they were looking to acquire and the materials they were using to trade it with.

Normally, these pills were items that one could only wish for. However,

this was the Medicine Clan and there were no pills that one could not acquire here, though the only prerequisite for acquiring them was having something that the Medicine Clansmen were willing to trade for.

This was a grand event to the various powers that had the qualifications to enter the Medicine Clan to trade as the pills that were acquired during the tournament were not necessarily for the use of their own clans as the pills, being something produced by the Medicine Clan, would be a priceless treasure that would be worth an entire city with even a single pill being nigh impossible to acquire when brought to the outside world,

The pills that could be acquired in the Medicine Clan, even if there were of tier 3 and below, were still immensely profitable in sufficient quantities.

One of the reason why the Medicine Clan was willing to trade for pills was to establish relations with various powers and to strengthen the alliances between them, and more importantly, to collect and gather rare and precious alchemical materials.

Though the Medicine Clan was strong, the power of their clan alone was limited, and it is only through the assistance of the various powers that all sorts of rare materials could be gathered.

Currently, Yao Lan was strolling along the streets, his eyes glancing at the banners intermittently looking for any materials that he might be interested in. The fact that they were being displayed in the Medicine Clan attests to the rarity of the materials, and though they were also available in the clan treasury, they had to be exchanged for using contribution points.

"Elder Yao Lan !" Suddenly, a voice sounded out from behind.

Yao Lan stopped and turned around.

"Eh? It's brother Liao. What's the matter?"

"Can i speak to you for a moment over here please."

The person who had arrived was the patriarch of a subordinate family of the Medicine Clan named Liao Yun Tu who was ardently inviting Yao Lan over.

"Sure."

Yao Lan had encountered situations like this more than once in the past few days.

Truthfully, Yao Lan would gracefully decline such private discussions as any trades would have to be in accordance with the rules but the Liao family was of high standing in the Medicine Clan, having greased quite a few palms and a little face had to be given to them.

As expected,when the both of them had walked to a secluded area, Liao Yun Tu made his request.

"I know that elder Yao Lan is a busy man so i'll get straight to the point. I beg your pardon if any offence is caused."

“Brother Liao is exaggerating. What does the Liao family need? If it’s something minor, I can be of assistance.”

Yao Lan thought that the Liao family wished to purchase large quantities of low tier pills that were commonly used for replenishing energy, healing wounds. While pills like these were common in the outside world, their efficacy paled in comparison to those produced by the Medicine Clan as pills produced by other alchemists could not compete with the Medicine Clan and immense profits could be guaranteed person buying large quantities of such pills.

The problem was, the only ones that would stoop to refining such ordinary low tier pills in the Medicine Clan, and nine times out of ten, the people approaching Yao Lan, who was in charge of educating the clan’s youths approached him with exactly this reason in mind.

Yao Lan was accustomed to this. The youths in the clan had to refine large quantities of low tier pills if they wished to improve and since the pills they refined would only be rotting in storage so it was better to sell them as a favour to others and make a profit at the same time.

“Ahem... I heard that in the recent school competition there was a pill called the VioletFlame pill. How would the VioletFlame pill fare in comparison to the AzureFlame pill?”

Liao Yun Tu coughed lightly, his words startling Yao Lan.

“Brother Liao, why are you interested in this pill? It’s only an ordinary tier 3 pill and furthermore, it can’t be produced in large quantities.”

"Haha, it may be so but i've heard that elder Yao Wan Huo praised this pill highly and said that for flame attributed martial practitioners, it was a good pill used for breakthroughs. I'm not in this for the profit but for my son, he's been stuck at the nine star Martial Practitioner level for over a decade....and this might be his only chance."

Yao Lan furrowed his brow. It was one thing for the clan to trade with the outside world but solicitations towards the clan's outstanding youths by the various powers was frowned upon in order to maintain order in the clan.

The nature of naive youths tend to make them feel favorably towards such solicitors and the clan tries to prevent the youths from being influenced by such people when they were still young and did not know much about the ways of the world.

As such, if the Liao family wished to approach Yao Chen, who created the VioletFlame pill, they had to do so through the school.

As the Liao family was a subordinate of the Medicine Clan and a contributor to the clan's power and influence, the clan was willing to close an eye to private solicitations like this so long as nothing untoward happens. However, if something were to actually happen, it would instantly sour all relations with the clan and the clan would have to be compensated fully.

The reason why Yao Chen could beat Yao Tong who had restored an ancient pill formula was because the VioletFlame pill could assist in breakthroughs; Though it wasn't a hundred percent success rate, it mere fact that it was possible was astonishing and though the Still Wind Lunar Invitation pill was great, it's origins were unclear. Furthermore, no matter

how good the Still Wing Lunar Invitation pill was, it was still a pill that was to be consumed before an impending battle but the VioletFlame pill could also do what the Still Wind Lunar Invitation pill could and moreover, its effect of assisting in breakthroughs made it the superior pill by far.

Truth be told, the Medicine Clan does have pills that could assist in making breakthroughs but the cost involved in producing them were exorbitant and the clan would only produce one or two such pills every few years, though even if the clan were to produce them every year, these pills would still be in short supply.

Apart from the refinement of such pills being tough with low success rates, the materials for such pills were also scarce and rarely seen. As such, though the VioletFlame pill's effect only had a chance of breakthroughs, it was still a priceless pill.

However, upon further investigation, the VioletFlame pill was a specialty of Yao Chen and no one else in the Medicine Clan was able to refine it. If anyone wished to acquire the VioletFlame pill they had to contact Yao Chen immediately; If news of it were to leak, it would be tough for the Liao family, given their current standing and influence to acquire the VioletFlame pill and furthermore, this was only if Yao Chen was willing to refine the pill.

While the Medicine Clan acts for the benefit of the clan as a whole, it also takes in account the wellbeing of its individual members because a clan that forces its members against their will would never survive through the ages.

"Sure, if a chance arises, I'll make the introductions. However, you

should be aware of what you have to fork out.”

“Rest assured elder, i’m willing to pay the price and will not disappoint you.”

Liao Yun Tu rejoiced and after giving his thanks, turned around and left.

Yao Lan lost interest in strolling the streets after this encounter.

Yao Chen hadn’t been to school recently, and from what Luo Shu said, seemed to be in closed cultivation. Yao Lan disapproved of Yao Chen’s closed cultivation; Yao Chen has been noticed by the upper echelons of the clan ever since he refined the VioletFlame pill and obtained the qualifications to participate in the tournament and there would be a lot of resources dedicated to cultivating him in the future and first first course of action would be to assist him in using the TriFlower Flame Concentrating method to establish his foundation after which he would be provided with the high level flame attributed techniques of the clan.

At this point of time, if Yao Chen was smart, he would be participating in more activities to network, thereby securing more benefits for himself in the future. By going into closed cultivation immediately, he was giving others the impression of being arrogant and aloof.

Yao Lan never would have thought that what was on Yao Chen’s mind was not his future, but being the champion of the tournament, the revival of his family name and inscribing his name onto the ancestral stone stele.

Qualifying for the tournament was something that brought joy to some and misery to others; Yao Chen’s qualification caused Yao Yun to lose his place and the resulting grudge was something that Yao Yun would not

forget, and was akin to a venomous creature biting his heart without letting go.

"Brother Feng, I'm incompetent."

Currently, Yao Yun had his head lowered and was standing before a tall and handsome youth with a face like white jade whose wide eyes were curved by his gaze, as if he were smiling.

This pale faced youth was Yao Feng, an elite amongst the clan's youths, who had advanced to the level of a Martial Master at the age of sixteen.

"It doesn't matter, I had originally thought that you would only be able to enter the top eight and didn't expect that Yao-whatever he's called to appear. Though he may have risen up suddenly, you are not to blame."

Yao Yun did not dare raise his head and could only meekly reply.

"Brother Feng, are you going to recruit him?"

"Haha, since he caused you to lose your spot in the tournament, naturally I'll take care of him. Recruit him? He's just a poor disciple who just got lucky, so long as you do what is required of you, you will have a share in any future benefits."

Yao Yun nodded his head, his face full of gratitude, and left after expressing his loyalty and determination.

After Yao Yun's departure, a sharp look flashed across Yao Feng's narrow eyes as the corner of his lips curled as he muttered to himself.

"Yao Chen? A branch family member whose great grandfather's name is inscribed onto the ancestral stele. Interesting indeed...."

Half a month flew by in the blink of an eye.

Unexpectedly Yao Chen, who had caught the attention of everyone, did not even appear once in this half a month, and no one ever saw him as he was still in closed cultivation.

Today was the start of the tournament and the whole clan was in a festive mood with families hanging lanterns and ten tall platforms were erected in the school field where the ancestral stele was located; The platform in the middle was for the elders of the clan, and the other platforms were filled with the esteemed guests who were gathered for the tournament.

There were over a hundred cauldrons in front of the stele, with a stone table beside every cauldron. On top of every table was a spatial ring which contained various materials for pill refining and the area was surrounded by the clan's guards who cleared the area of onlookers.

The tournament was different from the school competition because in the tournament, while numerous materials would be provided for by the clan, competitors were also allowed to use the precious materials that they had painstakingly gathered themselves. Yao Chen's future did not depend on the tournament, as it was something he earned himself by being the champion of the school competition where he made a stunning debut

after he refined the VioletFlame Pill.

Even his TriFlower Flame Concentrating method would not hinder him in the future as he could simply stop practicing it and pick up a higher tiered cultivation method and catch up with his peers. There was no reason why he could not become an expert in the clan, in fact, almost all the youths of the clan took this exact path as Yao Chen as it was the one that offered the brightest future.

Even a genius like Yao Tong was no exception as he had to also gain the attention of the clan and fight for resources for an easy path of cultivation without any obstacles.

As for Yao Chen, after his shocking debut in the school competition, the opportunity he won for himself was every bit as great as Yao Tong's if not greater. Not only did elder Yao Wan Huo personally proclaimed him the champion, the VioletFlame pill he refined had the effect of assisting flame attributed practitioners in breakthroughs and regardless of whether the formula for the pill was turned over to the clan or not, he would never be lacking in cultivation resources in the future.

This was the exact reason why in the eyes of Yao Lan and the other elders from the school, Yao Chen undergoing closed cultivation after refining the VioletFlame pill was due to him becoming arrogant after a little success, just like a typical young upstart.

"This Yao Chen couldn't have gotten cold feet right? Was the pressure of being the champion in the school competition too much for him to handle?"

After waiting for half a day and not seeing Yao Chen, Liao Yun Tu, who

was anxiously waiting for a chance to get the VioletFlame pill could no longer restrain his tongue.

After the school competition, Yao Chen had been avoiding all human contact; This was exceedingly unusual and the only reason for this unusual behaviour was that the pressure was too much for Yao Chen to bear.

No one would have expected that Yao Chen was attempting to break through to the Martial Master level; Everyone thought that attempting a breakthrough with the TriFlower Flame Concentrating method in just two short months was a fool's dream.

Yao Lan looked at Liao Yun Tu placidly.

"It's up to him if he chooses to come or not."

Yao Lan walked towards the elder's platform as it was about time to announce the start of the tournament; Liao Yun Tu smiled bitterly and to be honest, was extremely displeased but regardless of how displeased he was, Yao Chen was still a member of the Medicine Clan and as such, he could only bear with his displeasure and force out a smile. Furthermore, it was him who came requesting a favour though he did not expect the Yao Lan, who had always been neutral and impartial, to be dissatisfied with Yao Chen as well.

Truthfully, there had been plenty of negative rumours about Yao Chen surfacing; Unremarkable aptitude, embarrassing family background, and other negative rumours spread like wildfire and Liao Yun Tu has heard them all. However, he thought that the rumours were all false and were

likely spread by people who were jealous of Yao Chen's success though looking at the situation now, there seemed to be a grain of truth in the rumours. However, all these did not matter to him as his only goal was to obtain the VioletFlame pill and he could care less about what sort of person Yao Chen was.

However, the worse off Yao Chen became and the lower his position in the clan became, the better it was for him as it would heighten the chances of him acquiring the VioletFlame pill though unfortunately, he probably wasn't the only one who thought this way.

Sadly, it seems that the only people who truly cared for Yao Chen in the clan was Luo Shu and his family.

Currently, Luo Bing was leading his squad to maintain order in the surrounding area with his eldest son Luo Shan following right behind him. Though it was said to be maintaining order, in actual fact, all they were doing was just standing there as if they were nothing more than decorative statues as their roles were more ceremonial than functional. The area Luo Bing was in charge of was the competitor's entrance though no matter how much Luo Bing craned his neck, Yao Chen was nowhere to be seen.

As he looked towards the elder's platform, he saw that elder Yao Wan Huo had already stood up and was speaking to the patriarch Yao Dan; The elders of the main houses and the branch families were all standing by as well and it seemed as if the tournament was able to begin.

"Has that brat Luo Shu actually found Yao Chen?"

Luo Bing asked Luo Shan with his brows furrowed; He was feeling anxious because if Yao Chen was not present when the tournament starts, he would be immediately disqualified and everyone on the refining platform will begin competing.

“Father, allow me to go search for him.”

Luo Shan knew his brother best; That brat Luo Shu has always given others an air of unreliability whenever he did something and as a team leader, Luo Bing had the qualifications to dispatch Luo Shan.

However right at this moment, there were two shadows running towards them and one of the shadows was noticeably fat, instantly recognisable as Luo Shu.

Chapter 10 – First match of the tournament

Together with Luo Shu, Yao Chen was running as if his life depended on it. However upon closer inspection, Yao Chen's looked dispirited and his face was pale and pallid.

"Hahaha Yao Chen's finally arrived."

After all, Yao Chen was the champion of the school competition, and had also refined the Violet Flame pill and would naturally have garnered much attention to himself. However, those that did not recognise Yao Chen had a look of surprise on their faces.

"Eh? This is Yao Chen?"

"This is what the champion of the school competition looks like?"

"He looks so sickly... could it be that he was recovering from an injury in the past month?"

"It's possible. After all, winning the competition with just his cultivation level of a nine starred martial practitioner without paying a price beggars belief."

"If this is the case.... if i were him, i would not have shown myself today and would have tried to retain an air of mystery that would be beneficial to my future endeavours."

"That's true, participating in the tournament looking like this is simply disgraceful."

Various sounds could be heard and some words of ridicule were purposefully said loudly for everyone to hear, eliciting mocking laughter from the surroundings. Those that did not intend to mock Yao Chen originally did so after seeing his pitiful appearance; Participating in the tournament in such a sorry state could be said to be an act of charity.

Yao Chen ignored the sounds of ridicule and mockery. Though he was indeed a little sick and in sub optimal condition, he still was confident about the tournament and though it could not be said that he was perfectly confident about his chances, he was still about seventy to eighty percent sure.

Luo Shu's cheeks twitched; While what the others have said was indeed harsh, Luo Shu also thought that Yao Chen may have bitten off more than he could chew this time. Going into closed cultivation was a good thing but having had his closed cultivation reduce Yao Chen into such a sorry state left Luo Shu speechless and he could only utter a simple phrase of encouragement.

"Good luck brother Chen, i'm rooting for you."

Yao Chen smiled faintly and proceeded to walk in the preparation area amidst sounds of mockery from the crowd where there were already over a hundred participants making their preparations.

Although the school only had eight slots for the tournament, not all families will send their children to the school because only the most

fundamental of the basics were taught at the school and the only discernible advantage of the school was the firm basic foundation that its students had. Families with the means would either choose to homeschool their children or hire an expert to personally tutor their children and this sort of private education was naturally superior to the general education provided by the school.

The school was not the only one allocated slots for the tournament as there were other families and branches of the clan that were also allocated slots; The Medicine Clan was massive, so much so that no matter how one tries to limit the number of participants there would still be over a hundred competitors in the tournament. The number of competitors was a testament to the Medicine Clan's strength as every youth competing in the tournament was at least of the Martial Master level....with Yao Chen being the sole exception. However, with the assistance of his techniques, Yao Chen is able to display strength equivalent to that of a Martial Master and as such, he too can be considered a Martial Master.

As an ancient clan, having strong successors was the key to maintaining their strength and it was only when the past, the present and the future members of the clan were strong will the clan be able to display its might and intimidate its enemies.

Yao Chen walked to a corner and was about to sit down when he heard mocking laughter.

"Yao Chen, seeing the sorry state you're in, will you pass out halfway?"

Yao Chen laughed deprecatingly.

"Maybe."

Zuo Hong Le blinked his eyes in surprised and whispered in Yao Chen's ears.

"Surely you must know that Yao Feng wants to make an example out of you?"

"Aren't you afraid that he might make you his target after seeing you talk to me like this?"

Zuo Hong Le rubbed his nose.

"What if i told you that he sent me over to gain information on you?"

"Haha, then i won't disappoint him for thinking so highly of me."

"You've got guts. Regardless of what happens, i admire you. Good luck."

"You too."

"Im curious as to what sort of pill you will be refining. While the VioletFlame pill is good, this is the grand tournament and truth be told, a tier 3 pill just isn't going to cut it here."

Even if a miraculous victory could only be pulled off once and could not

be repeated, Yao Chen had piqued Zuo Hong Le's interest because when he looks at Yao Chen's sickly face he had a gut feeling that Yao Chen was about to cause an uproar again; Zuo Hong Le has always had great faith in his gut feelings because they came true most of the time.

"You'll know when the time comes."

The self confidence readily apparent on Yao Chen's face made Zuo Hong Le even more confused because no matter how one looks at Yao Chen, his current condition was extremely poor and he was obviously in no shape to compete.

Right at this moment, the patriarch Yao Dan stood up on the elders platform and after saying the customary words of praise and encouragement to the youths, made a display of his authority before sitting down once more and handing over to the elder Yao Wan Huo so that he may proceed with the tournament.

Yao Wan Huo's fiery gaze swept across every competitor , his stern voice ringing out.

"All of you are the hope and future of the clan and i hope that you will all do your utmost.....i also have a piece of good news for all of you, the champion of the tournament will have to chance to become the disciple of the patriarch and furthermore, you will also be allowed to have your pick of an earth class martial technique from the clan's treasury."

The surroundings crowd erupted into cheers.

Every time the tournament was held, there would be an additional reward that serves as an incentive and in the past, the rewards were an exquisite weapon in addition to a Xuan class technique and in comparison to the past, the rewards this time round were more than enough to drive the crowd into a frenzy.

Putting the Earth class technique aside, the opportunity to become the patriarch's disciple was what drove the crowd into an excited frenzy.

Regardless of whether it was Dou Qi or pill refining, the patriarch Yao Dan was the strongest in the clan and his only disciple to date was the grand elder Yao Wan Huo. Rumour had it that Yao Wan Huo was only a youth of above average potential before he became the patriarch's disciple, and under the personal tutelage of the patriarch underwent a transcendent growth spurt and was able to crush every genius of his generation in just a year before becoming the grand elder of the clan, an unparalleled existence that was at the level of martial saint.

It could be said that so long as one becomes a disciple of the patriarch, even if he could not become the next Yao Wan Huo, he would still enjoy an extremely high status as the junior apprentice brother of the grand elder and would definitely become one of the clan's core elders. The status of a core elder was incomparably high and could not be compared to elders of the school such as Yao Lan or elders that were in charge of the clan's external affairs.

However, all these were of secondary importance as the thing that drove people into a frenzy was Yao Dan's ability to turn trash into treasure; So long as one wasn't a natural born talentless idiot, he would definitely be able to become a martial saint.

The eyes of all the youths in the preparation zone burned with a blazing fighting spirit and Yao Chen's sickly pale face flushed red with excitement upon hearing of the rewards. The smile that was present on Yao Tong's face vanished as he looked towards Yao Feng's direction. Even after sensing Yao Tong's gaze, Yao Feng's smiling expression remained unchanged, after all, while it was good to have fighting spirit, it would all be for naught in the end.

One's ability was dependant on his strength and last minute preparations were unable to change anything.

The Earth class technique and the seat of Yao Dan's disciple all belonged to Yao Feng; He had already known about the rewards in advance because not only was his elder brother the head of the clan's disciplinary department, his father was the second elder of the clan with a status that was comparable to the grand elder, and was responsible for the clan's dealings with the various powers and clans of the outside world. This was a position of immense influence and as such, there was nothing much that Yao Feng would not be privy to.

Yao Feng felt that the patriarch accepting a disciple this time was due to the patriarch taking a liking to Yao Feng's aptitude and talent, after all, who else could compare to him amongst the clan's youth? Yao Tong was not his match, much less Yao Chen.

Though the other families did have talented youths, there were all about the same level as Yao Tong and would not be able to pose much of a threat to him. His father had told him that the grand elder was the most impartial person in the clan and the person who trained the grand elder was the patriarch Yao Dan, who was a godlike figure in his father's eyes.

Yao Chen had heard of such stories every since he was young, if he could become a disciple of the patriarch, even if it was only a disciple in name....

It didn't even have to be the patriarch, even being a disciple of the grand elder would be more than he could ever wish for and his father would be smiling in his grave.

"Put all your abilities on display and show your clansmen the proof of your strength, right here and now this stage belongs to all of you!"

Following the grand elder's announcement, roaring sounds rang out and flames could be seen soaring into the sky as fireworks visible even in the bright sky exploded, signifying the start of the tournament.

In the preparation area, over a hundred youths stood ramrod straight as they lined up orderly and , guided by the guards, walked into the refining arena.

Yao Chen too, had a solemn expression on his face as this was a hallowed moment for everyone in the clan, himself included.

The opening battle was also a ceremonial battle that decided the top eight of the tournament. In this battle, one's opponent were people that were every bit as outstanding as you, if not even more so, any of which could enter the top eight and be recognised as the true elites of the clan and be marked as someone worth cultivating and while the others would also have some of the clan's resources allocated for their cultivation, the difference between them and those who were recognised as true elites is akin to the difference between heaven and earth.

Yao Chen found his designated spot, located near the corner, which had a table containing a spatial ring and a card bearing his name. Just as he reached his table, a loud sound was heard as the formation array sealing off the refining arena activated and a pillar of light spread out across the arena, signifying the true start of the tournament.

Everyone immediately burst into a flurry of activity and Yao Chen was no exception as he picked up the spatial ring and sent a stream of his spiritual sense into it, taking a measure of the materials stored in the ring in a matter of seconds.

The vast majority of the items stored in the ring were common materials with some rare materials included however, because the rare materials were given in small quantities, they could not be used as the main ingredient for refining a pill and could only be used as a supplement. Yao Chen took a deep breath, if he were to refine a pill using the materials given in the ring, he would only be able to refine an ordinary high grade pill. While such a pill would cause a huge uproar in the outside world, this was the Medicine Clan's grand tournament and the idea that such a pill could be used to compete against over a hundred of the clan's elite youths was a fool's dream.

Yao Chen raised his head, took a look at his surroundings and saw numerous people that had already started lighting their cauldrons and took out rare and exquisite materials that they had already prepared beforehand, obviously intending to give it all they've got.

Yao Chen's brow creased, if he were to use the materials that he had painstakingly prepared in advance, what would he use in the finals? An ordinary branch family was different than families from the main line of

descent as simply gathering the materials required for refining a special pill just once would require several years worth of effort and only branch families that had a certain amount of influence in the clan would be able to acquire more.

Yao Chen did not even have enough materials to refine a special pill even once and the only materials available to him were those provided by the clan. Outside the sealing formation were Luo Shu and his family who were currently squinting their eyes; Luo Bing looked at his disappointment of a son helplessly.

“What’s wrong with Yao Chen? Did you see your aunt Qing?”

Whether or not one could pass the preliminaries and enter the top eight was unimportant as what was truly important with regards to one’s future was displaying one’s talent and abilities. After all, with talent, ability and the prestige of the tournament, one need not worry about gaining the support of the clan for their future endeavours.

Anyone whose innate talent was satisfactory and was able to gain the support of the clan would have a limitless future ahead of them and in Luo Bing’s opinion, this was exactly what Yao Chen should be aiming for. As for becoming the champion of the tournament and inscribing his name onto the ancestral stele, it was better to leave such fanciful dreams alone.

Luo Shu scratched his head.

“I’m not sure, when i went over, aunt Qing was nowhere to be seen and brother Chen had just come out of closed cultivation...could he have

possibly overtrained himself?"

Luo Bing shooked his head, his eyes flashing as if he knew the whereabouts of Yao Qing, though he was unwilling to say more in the presence of his two sons.

BOOM

Suddenly, the formation array sealing off the refining arena emitted a strange sound; While the sound was not transmitted into the refining arena, it caused a huge uproar outside the formation.

"Heavenly flame! The Nine Nether Gale Flame!!"

The faces of the audience members from various great powers changed.

Yan Xiao, the elder of the Flame clan narrowed his gaze as he questioned the disciple responsible for intelligence beside him.

"Who is he?"

The Flame clan, which specialised in the use of flames and had three heavenly flames within their clan were extremely sensitive to the happenings of the Medicine Clan. There were two heavenly flames within the Medicine clan, the Nine Nether Gale Flame and the Earthen Turtle Spirit Flame. The only ones capable of being a match for the Flame Clan in the use of flames was the Medicine clan, and both clans have had multiple conflicts because of the heavenly flames each side possessed.

"Brother."

"Elder, his name is Yao Feng, seventeen this year, a lineal descendent of the clan and the younger brother of the head of the disciplinary department Yao Wan Gui."

"Eh? Yao Wan Gui's younger brother? Seventeen years old and already able to control the heavenly flame.... no that's wrong, he isn't able to control the Nine Nether Gale Flame but is merely making use of pills to borrow the power of the flame."

The Flame clan were the best at manipulating flames and Yao Xiao was able to discern the truth behind Yao Feng's usage of the heavenly flame after a mere glance. Though Yao Feng was merely borrowing the power of the flame and his usage of the Nine Nether Gale Flame was insufficient to kill enemies in combat, it would be more than sufficient for pill refining. Furthermore, the reason why Yao Feng was able to manipulate the flames for pill refining even though his Dou Qi's strength was insufficient was also because he was merely borrowing the power of the flame.

Yan Xiao couldn't care less about who won the tournament and as long as he was able to get some pills from the Medicine clan he didn't care much about the happenings of the Medicine clan. However, now that the Medicine clan had methods that allowed a seventeen year old brat to directly borrow the powers of a heavenly flame....

Yan Xiao's gaze intensified as he looked at Yao Feng.

Whoosh

Yao Feng's arms emitted a loud sound akin to that of a raging gale as two streams of the Nine Nether Gale Flame shot out of his palms into his cauldron. The flames leapt energetically as they revolved around his cauldron and emitted a strange whirring sound that wasn't loud but yet managed to strangely enter the ears of the crowd, causing them to feel vexed.

Yao Chen had just started circulating his TriFlower Flame Concentrating method to ignite the cauldron when the sounds emitted from the Nine Nether Gale Flame entered his ears, and a feeling of vexation rose unbidden in his heart, nearly causing him to lose control of his flame.

"The Nine Nether Gale Flame!!"

The fact that the clan possessed two heavenly flames was an open secret but even so, the heavenly flames could not be subdued by just anyone. The heavenly flames were sentient and they each had their own temperaments and the Nine Nether Gale Flame originated from the extreme yin of the abyss and had agglomerated into a gale of extreme yin that evolved a sentient consciousness after countless years of devouring souls and absorbing yin energy, and was incredibly tough to subdue due to its inherent nature.

And yet, someone who was able to use the Nine Nether Gale Flame had appeared in the tournament! This caused numerous competitors who were originally burning with fighting spirit to lose their confidence, after all this was the Nine Nether Gale Flame, what did they have that could be used to compete against it?

Heavenly flames were a mystical item for alchemists because every alchemist that possessed a heavenly flame was, without an exception, a legendary figure in the alchemic world whose exploits would spread far and wide.

Yao Chen's psyche was shaken as a voice kept whispering in his ear and a sudden bout of depression descended upon him and an inexplicable urge to give up welled up within him. All his meticulous preparations were for naught, after all, his opponent had a heavenly flame and was thus invincible as he had nothing that he could use to compete and furthermore, his goal was....

Suddenly, Yao Chen awoke from his trance! Giving up?!

He actually thought about giving up!

Yao Chen's heart lurched; The tournament was his obsession and also his only chance of inscribing his name upon the ancestral clan stele, he would rather die than surrender in the tournament!

Huge droplets of sweat the size of beans sprouted from Yao Chen's face and slowly rolled down along his cheeks. He had nearly fallen prey to the Nine Nether Gale Flame's insidious trap! The Nine Nether Gale Flame is a flame that uses sound to directly attack a person's heart and all those who listened to its insidious voice would be affected by things ranging from nausea to self destructive depression. Yao Chen collected himself and forcefully circulated his spiritual force, ignoring the insidious whispers of the Nine Nether Gale Flame as he kept repeating his convictions to himself, strengthening them.

“Win....I want to win....I have to win...I MUST WIN!!!”

BOOM

Samadhi flames erupted from the bottom of his cauldron as Yao Chen took a deep breath and picked up the spatial ring, circulated his Dou Qi and took out two identical materials from the ring before enveloping them in his Dou Qi and placing them into the cauldron. By using his spiritual sense in conjunction with his Dou Qi, Yao Chen was able to sense any and all changes that the materials underwent under the Samadhi flame's refining. Driven by Yao Chen's Dou Qi, the Bone Refining Stone, Paramita Worm and all sorts of materials underwent changes as they merged with the Samadhi flames and slowly, Yao Chen began to assimilate his consciousness as well. Currently, Yao Chen was akin to a lord with dominion over everything in the cauldron and with his spirit as the guide and his Dou Qi as the driving force, was controlling the entire process of assimilation.

On the elders platform, the grand elder Yao Wan Huo swept his gaze across the arena, gazing at the competitors who were the future of the clan. The corners of his mouths curled upwards into a smile when he saw Yao Feng manipulating the Nine Nether Gale Flame; Even though Yao Feng was merely borrowing the power of the flame, the fact that he was able to gain the recognition of the flame's consciousness meant that there was a possibility of him actually controlling the flame in the future.

Yao Wan Huo's gaze slowly fell onto Yao Tong. Though Yao Tong was a member of a branch family, his father held influence within the clan as the head of a family of soldiers and has earned significant credit over the years. The grand elder knew of Yao Tong's hidden potential even if other didn't though currently, under the influence of the Nine Nether Gale Flame, Yao Tong was unable to display his abilities fully and his flame

used for refining was flickering unsteadily.

To be fair, Yao Tong wasn't the only one who was affected as practically everyone in the refining arena was also affected by the Nine Nether Gale Flame with those closest to Yao Feng being affected the most heavily. However, they were all elites and after a short period of time, they were all able to collect themselves and continue their refining though they clearly had less drive and spirit compared to how they were before and as such, the quality of the pills they refined would suffer as a result.

It seemed as if the lineal descendants would be the champions once again unless....

Suddenly, Yao Wan Huo's gaze intensified as they fell upon Yao Chen as a look of doubt appeared in his eyes.

"Strange.."

A thing middle aged man was walking by from the side when he heard Yao Wan Huo remark and replied smilingly.

"What's wrong grand elder?"

Yao Wan Huo turned around and smiled.

"Nothing is wrong elder Wan Huang, i just felt that something is a little off with this kid."

Yao Wan Huo replied as he raised his hand and pointed at Yao Chen.

The middle aged man had elongated facial features, a beak of a nose and had a sinister look to him. Yan Wan Gui , the head of the clan's disciplinary department who was the second elder of the clan with a status akin to that of the grand elder was his eldest son while Yao Feng, who possessed the Nine Nether Gale Flame and was currently competing was his second son.

"Yao Chen? Surely the grand elder does not think that he has entered into a pill refining trance?"

Yao Wan Huang's eyes swept across Yao Chen and the corners of his mouth curled into a cold smile.

"I've heard of this kid, he's the champion of the school competition and the source of gossip lately though the gist of it is always the same; Yao Tong was careless and Yao Chen was lucky, after all, his ancestors were capable people and that was why he is able to get to where he is today because otherwise, he would never have succeeded because he is only a one starred Martial Master."

"He's cultivating with the TriFlower Flame Concentrating method and judging by the rate of his progression, he should never have been able to break through to the Martial Master realm by the age of twenty regardless of what he does because the TriFlower Flame Concentrating method that he is using skips the process of consolidating a foundation in its initial phases and as such, the Dou Qi criterion for breaking through into the Martial Master realm can only be fulfilled by waiting."

With what he wanted to say spoken, Yao Wan Huo's gaze fell upon Yao Chen once more with his eyes slightly narrowed and holding a hint of anticipation.

Seeing that look of anticipation caused Yao Wan Huang caused his expression to change slightly. He looked at Yao Chen seriously and he furrowed his sharp brows.

"It seems like a person who has exceeded the realm of the TriFlower Flame Concentrating method has appeared."

